Public Document Pack

Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 9 December 2025
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)
Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset.

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact 01305 252234 - kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic & Governance Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Page No

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES 5 - 20

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2025.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer

in advance of the meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below. Further information read Public Participation - Dorset Council

All submissions must be emailed in full to Kate.Critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on 4 December 2025.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk 8.30am on Thursday 4 December 2025.

Dorset Council Constitution – Procedure Rule 13

6. FORWARD PLAN 21 - 30

To consider the draft Cabinet Forward Plan for January 2026.

7. COUNCIL PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 31 - 68

To consider a report of the Leader of the Council and Cabiner member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding.

8. DORSET LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY 69 - 196

To consider a report of the Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding.

9. DORSET NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT 197 - 282

To consider a report of the Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding.

10. ADOPTION OF THE CRANBORNE CHASE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN 283 - 420

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning.

11. NEW FOREST RECREATION MITIGATION STRATEGY 421 - 454

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency.

12. REPORT TO CHANGE CABINET DECISION OF DELEGATIONS FOR HIGHWAY SERVICE CONTRACT (HTSC) 455 - 458

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Place.

13. AVERAGE SPEED CAMERAS - A30 SHERBORNE DIAL CARRIAGEWAY 459 - 466

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Place Services.

14. DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP CLOSURE 467 - 474

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy.

15. FUTURE LEISURE MANAGEMENT 475 - 488

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement.

Appendix 2 is exempt and is set out in item 19 of the agenda pack.

16. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

17. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To consider passing the following recommendation:

Recommendation

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in the following item(s) because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered. (Any live streaming will end at this juncture).

Reason for taking the item in private

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

18. FUTURE LEISURE MANAGEMENT 489 - 490

Para 3

Exempt Appendix associated with the “Future Leisure Management” report above.

19. ACQUISITION OF LAND NEIGHBOURING DORSET INNOVATION PARK 491 - 506

Para 3

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic.

Dorset Council

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Apologies: None

Also present: Cllr Peter Dickenson, Cllr Matt Bell, Cllr Neil Eysenck, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr Kate Wheller, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Jon Orrell, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr Andrew Parry and Cllr Piers Brown

Also present remotely: Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Val Pothecary and Cllr David Tooke

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Jan Britton (Executive Director - Place), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), Lisa Cotton (Corporate Director for Customer and Cultural Services), Sam Crowe (Director of Public Health), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Sam Poole (Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Strategic Director - Weymouth 2040), Jessica Maskrey (Head of Service – Assets & Property), Paul Scothern (Service Manager Capital Commissioning), Jack Wiltshire (Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering) and Carly Galloway (Service Manager Business Operations)

66. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

68. **Public Participation**

There was one public statement and this was attached as Appendix A to the minutes.

69. **Questions from Councillors**

One question was received from Councillor M Parkes; this along with the response was set out in Appendix B to these minutes.

70. **Forward Plan**

The Cabinet Forward Plan for December was received and noted.

71. **September 2025 (Period 6) financial management report 2025/26**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy presented the Period 6 Financial Management report, which provided a comprehensive overview of Dorset Council's financial position as of 30 September 2025. He confirmed that the projected overspend was £5.3 million and mainly due to the rising cost of adults and children's social care, plus delays in savings from the Our Future Council transformation programme. However, he emphasised that this was an improving picture.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy advised that the Highways budget underspend was primarily due to higher than anticipated car parking income. Members were informed that recruitment for community highways officers was actively underway, and this would strengthen local services.

Members also noted that the recent dip in homelessness performance was a temporary issue. Dorset Council continued to perform strongly overall against homelessness targets, and measures were in place to maintain and further improve outcomes.

It was proposed by Cllr S Clifford and seconded by Cllr B Wilson

Decision

(a) That the Senior Leadership Team's forecast of the full year's outturn for the Council, made at the end of September 2025 including progress of the transformational and efficiency savings incorporated into the budget, be noted.

(b) That the capital programme for 2025/26 be noted.

(c) That the number and extent of contract exemptions be noted.

(d) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for People (Children) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills to award phase 2 of the valuing care programme with IMPOWER which increases total spend to £0.94m. (as set out in Appendix D of the report to Cabinet of 11 November 2025)

Reason for the decision

The Council was legally required to set a balanced budget every year and so must deliver services within the resources made available through the revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26. The report summarised the Council's forecast financial performance for the year at the end of September 2025.

72. **Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy set out the framework for the 2026/27 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The report also outlined the ongoing challenging work throughout the autumn to enable the budget to be finalised ahead of the Full Council meeting in February 2026. The Cabinet Member proposed the recommendation as set out in the report.

In seconding the recommendation Cllr B Wilson advised that given the ongoing uncertainty, this highlighted that the council must continue its transformation journey. As a whole organisation, this evolution was essential to ensure that services remain efficient, deliver value, and meet the needs of the community.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy confirmed that no additional car parking charges were anticipated within the budget. He further noted that setting a balanced budget remained highly challenging and due to pressures, there was very little flexibility available to the council.

Decision

(a) That the updated cost pressures set out in the Cabinet report of 11 November 2025 and the validation work that had been carried out on them, be noted.

(b) That the assumptions being used in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) be agreed.

(c) That the financial gap arising from (b) and (c) above be noted.

(d) That Cabinet agrees the 2026/27 principles for budget setting outlined in section 13 of the report of 11 November 2025.

(e) That the approach to closing the budget gap set out in the report of 11 November 2025 be noted, recognising that the work was in progress.

(f) That Cabinet continues to lobby local MPs and work with peers to press the case for additional, multi-year funding.

(g) That Cabinet Members work with officers to continue to identify and develop further efficiencies and savings.

(h) That Cabinet endorse the next steps and timetable leading up to the 2026/27 budget which will presented to full Council on 10 February 2026.

Reason for the decision

Local councils were legally obligated to set a balanced annual budget, meaning that planned expenditure must be matched by sustainable income sources. This excludes reliance on one-off or short-term funding that cannot be maintained over time.

The report of 11 November 2025 was presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the projected budget gap for 2026/27 and the subsequent years covered by the MTFP. It also outlined progress made to date on identified actions and savings, including the forecasted financial performance for 2025/26 against the approved budget.

73. **Highways Capital Programme Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services introduced a report outlining a proposed multi-year funding strategy for highways investment from 2026 to 2030. The strategy included a £15.5 million boost for roads and cycleways, alongside an opportunity to secure £1.5 million from the new National Structures Fund for urgent repairs to the A30 Shaftesbury bridge. Moving to a multi-year approach would enable smarter planning, more efficient road maintenance, and improved resilience to climate challenges.

The Cabinet Member then proposed the recommendations and these were seconded by Cllr S Bartlett.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Place Services confirmed that the Local Transport Plan and the integrated Asset Management Plan would be used to ensure that maintenance was carried out in the areas where it was required.

Decision

(a) That £1.5M of funding from the Department for Transport's new Structures Fund, be sought for essential concrete repairs and structural maintenance for the A30 Shaftesbury Bridge.

(b) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve funding allocation to the A30 Shaftesbury Bridge scheme from the Department for Transport Highways Maintenance Block allocation if the project is not eligible for the Structures Fund or maintenance is needed before the Structures Fund is allocated.

(c) That Cabinet approves the spend within the forward plan (as set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report of 11 November 2025) for Department for Transport and other externally funded highway improvement and structural maintenance work over £500k, and delegates the making of any contract

award for schemes within Appendix A to the Cabinet Member for Place Services in consultation with the Executive Director for Place.

(d) That Cabinet endorse the overall highway structural maintenance programme as agreed and in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services, and confirm that approval of expenditure for individual schemes below £500k within that programme be made under the existing Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council.

Reason for the decision

To align the Department for Transport's multi-year funding with the local objectives of the Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029.

To support more effective long term asset management and gain additional Department for Transport investment for Dorset's highway network. Improving resilience, connectivity and road safety would strongly contribute to the Council's priorities of growing our economy, communities for all and responding to the climate and nature crisis.

74. **Weymouth 2040: - Renewable Energy Partnership**

The Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development introduced a report outlining a proposed strategic partnership between Source Galileo and Dorset Council. This collaboration aimed to deliver an innovative and transformational approach to accelerating the development of onshore renewable and clean energy projects on council-owned land and property. The proposed project would make a significant contribution to the Council's clean energy ambitions as set out within the council plan, climate and economy strategies.

In response to questions relating to the future of a county farm in the Chickerell area, the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development clarified that the land was of moderate to poor quality. The farm was not being sold; its lease had expired, and this was an opportunity to repurpose this land.

In response to a question regarding biodiversity and green infrastructure, the Legal and Democratic Services Director and Monitoring Officer reminded members that these were planning considerations. Cabinet did not have a role to play in determining any future planning application.

In response to further questions, members were advised that as part of the farm strategy work, all farm assets had been assessed in line with the priorities that were laid out within the strategy. This included supporting entrance into agriculture and farming opportunities. This site was not particularly well suited as a starter farm or a progression farm opportunity and as such disposal or re-purposing was considered the best way forward.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr C Sutton

Decision

That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to:

(i) Progress the Solar PV opportunity at Higher South Buckland Farm.
(ii) Work with SSEN to secure a grid connection to enable future deployment with the next 24 months.
(iii) Enter a strategic partnership with Source Galileo to advance the project.

The project supported Dorset Council's net zero goals and offered early delivery potential, directly contributing to the intersecting clean energy and Weymouth regeneration ambitions of the Council Plan and our climate and economy strategies.

Reason for the decision

To advance the Higher South Buckland Farm, Solar PV by securing a grid connection and enter into an agreement through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Source Galileo to advance this renewable energy project. The County Farm presented a strategic opportunity for renewable energy deployment. Securing grid access and exclusivity would enable Dorset Council to move forward with a 50MW solar PV project. This supported the Council's net zero goals and offered a quicker win in the regeneration programme.

75. **Weymouth 2040: A Regeneration Vision Rooted in Place and People - Levelling up fund**

The Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth presented a report setting out the comprehensive and ambitious overview of the current regeneration initiative proposed for Weymouth. It aimed to inform Dorset Council's strategic decisions by consolidating advisory input on a hotel-led mixed-use development at Weymouth Peninsula, development on North Quay and the heart of Weymouth, cultural and visitor centre.

In response to questions the Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth confirmed that:

- If other opportunities arose, considered appropriate and funding was available, additional areas of development could be considered in the future.
- The current papers before members relate specifically to projects in Weymouth
- A proposed disposal strategy will be approved for North Quay site, based on a closed or selective tender process.
- A further paper would be considered by Cabinet in the future on a preferred developer or confirmation that the site would be included in the strategic partnership proposal.
- Confirmed that he had confidence in the brief which would offer high-quality design and community benefits.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr R Hope

Decision (unanimous)

Weymouth Peninsula Development Proposal

(a) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to:

(i) Formally invite Hall & Woodhouse to submit a proposal for a long leasehold development on the Weymouth Peninsula.
(ii) Ensure the proposal aligns with the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan, including:
- Provision of hospitality and leisure facilities.
- Delivery of public realm enhancements that support placemaking and community benefit.

(iii) Report any recommended proposal to the Harbour Advisory Committee, Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group and Cabinet for approval.

North Quay, Development

(b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to:

(i) Approve the proposed disposal strategy for the North Quay site, based on a closed or selective tender process.
(ii) Finalise the tender framework, including developer selection criteria and disposal conditions.
(iii) Request a further report to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the process and recommending either a preferred developer or confirmation that the site will be included in the strategic partnership proposal.

Heart of Weymouth, Cultural and Visitor Centre, the Rectory, St Thomas Street

(c) To approve the investment of £1.1 million from the Levelling Up Fund towards the acquisition of The Rectory freehold and that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to approve and progress with the most appropriate to investment option, subject to:

(i) a council review of investment options.
(ii) the Weymouth Area Development Trust CIC confirming that it has secured capital funding; and
(iii) submission and satisfactory review of:
- Architectural plans.
- Cost plan and development cashflow.

- Full project programme.
- Evidence of positive pre-planning consultation.
- A viable business case to be produced by Weymouth Area Development Trust CIC (WADT) for long term community use, including operational plans, financial forecasts, market need, and a fundraising strategy.

The proposal must demonstrate financial viability, strategic alignment with Dorset Council's regeneration objectives, and WADT secured capital funding before Dorset Council commits its funding from its contribution as part of the Weymouth Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Regeneration Programme.

Reason for the decision

To progress key regeneration opportunities in Weymouth by inviting Hall & Woodhouse to formalise their interest in a long leasehold development at the Peninsula, and by enabling due diligence on proposals for North Quay and the Heart of Weymouth Cultural and Visitor Centre. These steps would ensure alignment with the Council's masterplan, tourism strategy, and Levelling Up Fund objectives, while safeguarding harbour interests and securing financial viability before any disposal or investment was confirmed.

76. **Weymouth 2040: Strategic Partnership**

Cabinet considered a report outlining proposals to establish a long-term Strategic Regeneration Partnership between Dorset Council and Willmott Dixon, in partnership with Milligan. The partnership aimed to accelerate the regeneration of Weymouth through a commercially led masterplan, feasibility studies or key Council-owned sites, and a strategic business plan to attract public and private investment.

Responding to questions, the Cabinet Member advised that to succeed it was important to acknowledge the potential benefits of leveraging external expertise to deliver sustainable regeneration and inward investment for Weymouth. The Leader of the Council emphasised that the Council was not a developer for this project, but it did have the responsibility to ensure the right people was in place to turn plans into action.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr N Ireland.

Decision (Unanimous)

Strategic Partnership - Willmott Dixon, in partnership with Milligan

That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (Interim s151 Officer) to:

(i) Assess the potential added value of a long-term Strategic Regeneration Partnership with Willmott Dixon, in partnership with Milligan.

(ii) Finalise the assessment of the use of the Pagabo Developer Led Framework and decide on whether to appoint Wilmott Dixon directly or run a further competition in accordance with the Framework terms.
(iii) Award a contract to undertake the commercial masterplan, high level feasibility studies and strategic business plan for 6 key initial Council-owned development sites up to a value of £250k (plus VAT) with Willmott Dixon or other supplier, with an option to extend the contract for further development works if desired.
(iv) Negotiate the fee structure for the Partnership and next stages; and
(v) Implement the necessary governance arrangements to support the Partnership.

Reason for the decision

The decision allows the Council to clarify the partnership structure, fee model, and deliverables to determine whether this collaboration offers added value beyond existing plans and whether it aligns with the Council's governance and procurement frameworks. It also provided the Council with a commercial masterplan, high level feasibility studies and strategic business plan to start the process of unlocking public and private sector investment.

77. **Asset Disposals and Transfers**

The Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth presented a report on the disposal and transfer of surplus non-operational assets to support the Strategic Asset Management Plan. The programme aimed to generate £45.7m in capital receipts over a five-year period, reduce maintenance liabilities and enable reinvestment in priority assets.

The proposed disposals were detailed in the exempt appendix. The Leader of the Council encouraged members to contact the Head of Asset & Property with any queries regarding the items listed in that appendix.

In response to a question regarding tenancy properties, members were advised that where properties were tenanted, conversations would be held with the tenant to give them the opportunity to purchase. In those cases, they would be considered a special purchaser and would not be required to go through the competitive process. However, in accordance with the best value duty, they would be expected to pay the market value of the property.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr G Taylor

Decision

(a) That the proposed pipeline for asset disposals as a key mechanism to deliver the Strategic Asset Management Plan, generate capital receipts and support the delivery of the Council Plan, be approved.

(b) That authority be delegated to approve disposals of individual assets identified on the disposals pipeline (as set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report 11 November 2025) each with an estimated value exceeding £500,000 and method of disposal to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Property, Assets & Economic Growth and for Finance & Capital Strategy and the Section 151 Officer.

Reason for the decision

To reduce the Council's property portfolio to a sustainable level, generate capital receipts, and lower maintenance costs, while enabling reinvestment in core assets. Disposals and asset transfers would empower communities, support regeneration and housing delivery, and ensure more efficient use of resources in line with Dorset Council's priorities.

78. **Children's Services Capital Programme**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills presented a report on the Children's Services Capital Programme, which outlined the current and future projects aimed at ensuring sufficient school places, improving suitability of school estates and expanding provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEND). The report also looked to clarify the delegations which were used against the programme to ensure they were valid, consistent and with appropriate oversight of projects.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

(a) That the budget and funding allocations to projects within Appendix A of the report of 11 November 2025 (current Capital Programme), be approved.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of People – Children's, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Skills and the Corporate Director Finance & Commercial/Chief Financial Officer & S151 Officer to agree funding allocation of up to £500,000 for any new project, provided those allocations were within the overall Capital Programme budget.

(c) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Director of People – Children's and Cabinet Members for Children's Services, Education and Skills and Property & Assets and Economic Growth and the Corporate Director Finance & Commercial/Chief Financial Officer & S151 Officer to procure and award contracts, or release agreed funding to third parties delivering projects, for

any project within Cabinet approved Appendix A, of the report, provided the project cost was contained within the overall programme budget.

Reason for the decision

To draw together several previous delegations against individual Capital programme budgets to ensure consistency across programmes. To ensure appropriate oversight and authority was in place to allow projects to progress through from inception to delivery.

79. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

80. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following items in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Reason for taking the item in private

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The live streaming was concluded at this juncture.

81. **Asset Disposals and Transfers - Exempt Appendix**

The exempt appendix associated with the report “Asset Disposals and Transfers” was not discussed in exempt business. The report was considered in open business as set out in no. 77 of these minutes

82. **Children's Services Capital Programme - Exempt Appendix**

The exempt appendix associated with the report “Children’s Services Capital Programme” was not discussed in exempt business. The report was considered in open business set out in no 78 of these minutes.

83. **Dorset Care Record**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care presented the exempt report and its recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr J Andrews.

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report be approved

Reason for the decision

To enable Dorset Council to continue its strategic role in the Dorset Records Programme ensuring continuity of service and provision.

Appendix A - Public Participation
Appendix B - Councillor Question

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.18 pm

Chair

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Cabinet – 11 November 2025

Statements from the Public

Statement from Phil Say, Director of Weymouth Pavilion

My name is Phil Say and I'm a Director of Weymouth Pavilion CIC. My statement refers to agenda item 11 – Weymouth 2040 and a proposal for a pub/restaurant with rooms to be cited on the Weymouth peninsula between the Pavilion and the Roundhouse B&B.

I struggle to believe that in these times of poor financial security, with the threat of rising taxes and business costs, Dorset Council are considering the proposal of a new 'Pub with rooms' adjacent to Weymouth Harbour. The pub will not only compete directly with existing hotels, guesthouses and pubs but will also have a severe financial impact to Weymouth Pavilion. The Pavilion cannot compete with the buying power of a large chain, yet still will be forced to match or beat their prices to not lose custom. The suggested location of the structure, adjacent to the theatre load in facility, will result in noise complaints and a possible restriction of operations. The loading in and out of equipment takes place at unsociable times and large vehicles arrive and depart at all times of the day and night.

It was my understanding that the redevelopment of the peninsula would take place as a whole, with an overall plan for the site, but this proposal of a 'pub with rooms' would suggest that the site is now to be offered piecemeal. This proposal suggests to me desperation to accept any offer made, with complete disregard to a coherent plan or existing businesses.

The 'gap' between the Pavilion and Devonshire Buildings was intentional to negate any disturbances from the operation of an entertainment venue. I believe that this 'gap' is also protected to maintain the view of the Georgian Seafront from the Nothe as mentioned in the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan and various other documents over the past few decades.

The artists drawing shows the new construction to be on the old railway lines, restricting access to the recently constructed fish landing stage and facilities and would also hinder access for deliveries and emergency access to the rear of the Pavilion.

I fail to visualise exactly where a 14,355 sq ft building would fit adjacent to the Pavilion, let alone its own dedicated parking area.

In summary, while I support the regeneration of the peninsula, I cannot back this single proposal of a 'pub with rooms' – I think that it is the wrong thing in the wrong place.

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Cabinet – 11 November 2025
Councillor Questions

Question from Cllr M Parkes

Residents in Stapehill Road remain concerned to the amount of vehicles not adhering to the 30mph speed limit. A recent consultation carried out by the Town Council concluded that there was not enough support from residents of the town to reduce the limit to 20mph however Cllr Lugg and I recognise that the percentage of residents in the road that supported the reduction was greater.

It is our belief that enforcement of the existing speed limit would be far more appropriate and request that the council use CIL money to install ANPR cameras to enforce the speed limit as has been done in other areas within Dorset.

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews [comms version]

Dorset Council will consider the use of average speed cameras at the Cabinet meeting in December. We can also raise the request for enforcement on Stapehill Road with the Dorset Road Safety Partnership.

In the meantime, installing a Speed Indicator Device (SID) could be a more practical way to improve compliance. SIDs are widely used across Dorset and are proven to be effective in reducing speeds. Dorset Council already runs a community SID programme with Ferndown Town Council, who can request a device for this location and provide the necessary support. Our officers would be happy to assist the Town Council with this.

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews [version from service]

Dorset Council will be considering the principle of using average speed cameras in Dorset at December's Cabinet Meeting. We can also raise a request for camera enforcement on Stapehill Road with the Dorset Road Safety Partnership.

In the meantime, a more appropriate way to improve speed limit compliance on Stapehill Road might be to install a Speed Indicator Device (SID) at this location. These devices are used across Dorset in partnership with our communities and have a proven track record of successfully lowering drivers' speeds to meet set speed limits. Dorset Council has already set up a community SID programme with Ferndown Town Council, and they have the option to request a SID in this area, and commit their resource to it, if they wish to. Officers would be happy to help Ferndown Town Council with this request.

The Cabinet Forward Plan - January to April 2026
(Publication date – 19 DECEMBER 2025)

Explanatory Note:
This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions
Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (***Thresholds - £500k***); or
b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of *"significant"* for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2024/25

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning and Emergency Planning
Simon Clifford	Finance & Capital Strategy
Ryan Hope	Customer, Culture and Community Engagement
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care
Clare Sutton	Children's Services, Education & Skills
Gill Taylor	Health and Housing.
Ben Wilson	Corporate Development and Transformation

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
2026					
January					
Quarter 3 financial management report **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** Quarter 3 financial management report.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	*Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk*
Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Strategy report **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - Open	**Decision Maker Dorset Council**	**Decision Date 10 Feb 2026**	Cabinet 27 Jan 2026 Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee 19 Jan 2026 People and Health Scrutiny Committee 21 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	*Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk*
Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - 2038 **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Item relates to the making (adoption) of the plan subject to a favourable outcome in the referendum being held on 4 December 2025.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	*Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
New Forest National Park Local Plan consultation response **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** A response to the New Forest National Park Local Plan consultation.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	*Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager* *terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
School Admission Arrangements 2027-2028 **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - The annual statutory duty to determine the Admissions arrangements and the Co-ordinated school transfer scheme for the academic year 2027-28.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	*Ed Denham, School Admissions Manager* *ed.denham@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)*
Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood development Plan **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Item relates to making (adoption) of the plan subject to a favourable outcome in the referendum being held on 4 December 2025.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	*Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager* *ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To receive the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	*Sunita Khattra-Hall, Corporate Director for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Families sunita.khattra-hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)*
LADO (Local Authority Safeguarding Officer) Annual Report **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To receive the LADO Annual Report.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	*Sunita Khattra-Hall, Corporate Director for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Families sunita.khattra-hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)*
Active Travel Infrastructure Plan **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The Active Travel Infrastructure Plan sets out the network for walking, cycling and wheeling. This includes identified improvements and guides future investment decisions. The plan has been reviewed by the Place and Resources Overview Committee.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Christopher Peck, Principal Transport Planner christopher.peck@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
March					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Proposed revisions to the councils Housing Allocations Policy, which governs how social housing is allocated to applicants on the housing register. The revised policy update aims to ensure fairness, transparency and compliance with legal requirements while addressing local housing need. Key changes may include amendments to priority criteria, eligibility requirements, changes to relevant legislation and operational procedures.	**Decision Maker** **Dorset Council**	**Decision Date** **16 Apr 2026**	People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026 Cabinet 3 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Sarah How, Service Manager for Housing Solutions* *sarah.how@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*
Dorset Tenancy Strategy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** A tenancy strategy to set out the kinds and circumstances for different types of tenancies that should be provided to social rented housing tenants, including arrangements for fixed term tenancies, for registered providers which hold stock in the Dorset local authority area, to pay attention to when formulating their tenancy policies.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **3 Mar 2026**	People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Sharon Attwater, Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Performance* *sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Andrew Billany, Corporate Director for Housing* *andrew.billany@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Housing Standards Enforcement Policy & Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To agree the adoption of a new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy & Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties to account for legislative changes being enacted under the Renters Rights Act 2025.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 3 Mar 2026**	People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Steven March, Service Manager for Housing Standards steven.march@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Andrew Billany, Corporate Director for Housing andrew.billany@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*
Towards a new model of day opportunities **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Fully exempt** To consider the results of the consultation on the future of day services in Dorset and use this information to shape a way forward for these services. The consultation was launched on a set of proposals across Dorset arising from Cabinet's agreement in principle to the new model for these services at its meeting on 10 September 2024.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 3 Mar 2026**	Health and Wellbeing Board 11 Feb 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	*Sarah Perrett, Commissioning Manager - Micro Provider & Voluntary Sector Development sarah.perrett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Karen Stephens, Interim Head of Service - Market Relationships, Major Contracts, and Over 65's karen.stephens@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
E-scooter hire scheme: Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester; and Upton and Corfe Mullen **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To consider any recommendations from February Place & Resources Overview Committee on whether the Council should take advantage of the DfT's offer to local authorities to allow e-scooter rental trials. The paper is dependent on permission being granted by DfT and an application has already been made, the results of which would be known soon.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **3 Mar 2026**	Place and Resources Overview Committee 5 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Christopher Whitehouse, Projects Team Manager* *christopher.whitehouse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
Crisis and Resilience Fund **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The Crisis and Resilience Fund is replacing the Household Support Fund from April 2026. In December, National Government will give us the final detail of what will be included within the fund and we will shape our community offer accordingly and will bring it to P&H Overview Committee and Cabinet for agreement to commence on the 1 April 2026.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **3 Mar 2026**		Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	*Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships* *Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Katie Hale, Head of Revenues and Benefits* *katie.hale@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Section 151 Officer*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - prioritisation of CIL funded infrastructure projects **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To provide an update on arrangements for spending strategic CIL. The report will address the clarification of current CIL funding commitments, and the identification and prioritisation of CIL funded projects to be supported through the Capital Programme process.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **3 Mar 2026**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	*Andrew Galpin, Infrastructure & Delivery Planning Manager* *andrew.galpin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
May					
Financial Provision for the Voluntary Community Sector **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The current 5-year financial agreement for the VCS will be coming to an end in October 2026. This paper will propose the new support for them.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date**	People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	*Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships* *Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jennifer Lowis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement* *jennifer.lowis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer*

Private/Exempt Items for Decision
Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
   (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
   (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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Cabinet
9 December 2025
Council Plan Progress Report
For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:
Steve Ford, Corporate Director, Strategy, Performance and Sustainability
Report author and job title: Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy
Email: liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1. This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress towards delivering the Council Plan. It outlines the strategic activities, enabling programmes and organisational developments that are shaping the conditions for successful delivery and transparent reporting.

1.2. The update covers five key areas:

- **Governance and performance:** Development of Dorset Council's strategic performance and risk monitoring framework, supporting transparent reporting and continuous improvement. This includes the establishment of the council plan monitoring dashboard, providing transparent access to performance data.
- **Enabling strategies and programmes**: progress on the development and mobilisation of core programmes that strengthen the council's capacity to deliver against each priority.
- **Delivery highlights**: early achievements and case studies demonstrating the impact of our work.
- **Engagement and collaboration:** ongoing work to build internal and external partnerships, ensuring delivery is shaped by lived experience, community insight, and cross-sector collaboration.

- **Strategic alignment:** embedding the council's strategic priorities across service planning, decision-making, and the wider strategy and policy landscape.

1.3. Together, these developments provide assurance that the interconnected elements required to deliver the council plan are being actively embedded and aligned across the organisation.

1.4. The report reinforces Dorset Council's commitment to place-based delivery, an approach that prioritises local needs and empowers communities. This work is underpinned by strong cross-sector partnerships and a proactive focus on prevention, addressing issues early and collaboratively. It reflects the council's ambition to build resilient, inclusive communities, delivering improved outcomes for residents.

1.5. This report provides a qualitative summary of progress and serves as a precursor to the annual report, which will take a more quantitative approach at the end of the financial year. This is underpinned by quarterly scrutiny of performance data through the relevant scrutiny committee.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- Note the establishment of the council plan monitoring framework as a key component of the Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring Framework, Appendix 1.
- Note the publication of the council plan reporting dashboard, providing transparent access to performance data.
- Note progress to date and the development of foundational programmes that support delivery of each council plan priority.
- Note early delivery highlights and case studies demonstrating impact of our work, Appendix 2.
- Approve the updated enabling strategy and policy framework that underpins council plan delivery, Appendix 3.
- Approve the refined performance framework for the Communities for All priority, for ongoing monitoring following co-design work, Appendix 4.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 These recommendations support the council's commitment to robust governance, transparency, and continuous improvement by aligning with the

reporting mechanisms set out in Dorset Council's Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring Framework.

3.2 Specifically, this approach establishes a twice-yearly reporting cycle to Cabinet on progress against the Council Plan, comprising a mid-year update and an annual end-of-year performance report in summer.

3.3 The production of an annual report aligns with Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on performance management for local authorities, ensuring consistency with sector best practice.

4. The report

4.1 The Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 was formally adopted by Full Council on 5 December 2024, following review by both the Joint Overview Committee and cabinet. The plan was shaped by a major engagement initiative the "Big Conversation" held during summer 2024 and further informed by insights from the 2023 residents' survey. This wide-ranging engagement ensured that the voices of residents, partners, and stakeholders were central to the plan's development.

4.2 The plan sets out four strategic priorities:

- Provide affordable and high-quality housing
- Grow our economy
- Communities for all
- Respond to the climate and nature crisis

4.3 Together, these priorities provide a clear and ambitious framework for delivering improved outcomes for residents and communities across Dorset, underpinned by the plan's vision: "working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations".

4.4 The pursuit of these objectives is guided by our equality statement and five organisational values: respect, openness, together, accountability and curiosity.

4.5 This is supported by strengthened governance arrangements, including the adoption of a risk appetite statement and the development of a robust risk management framework, in collaboration with the Audit and Governance Committee.

4.6 Dorset Council's Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring framework is integral to monitoring progress against the plan's objectives. The framework

sets out how performance and risk information flows across the organisation, enhancing understanding of strategic alignment and transparency.

4.7 This approach ensures that performance and risk are not only monitored but actively used to drive improvement and accountability. Quarterly performance data relating to key organisational deliverables and council plan progress is reported through the relevant scrutiny committees.

4.8 The performance monitoring arrangements for the council plan are now in place, with 2025/26 representing the first full reporting year. A public performance dashboard has been launched to support transparency and accessibility. Available here.

4.9 Quarter 1 (April- June 2025) performance data, covering both organisational and Council Plan measures, has been considered by People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2025, Quarter 2 data will be considered on 21 January 2026. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee will consider both Quarter 1 and 2 performance on 11 December 2025. Future data releases via the Council Plan dashboard will be aligned with the scrutiny reporting cycle.

4.10 As many of the measures, and some projects, are still in the early stages of development. This report therefore provides a summary of the foundational work being embedded to support effective delivery in future years. As implementation progresses, performance will be tracked through future reports, monitoring progress towards full delivery of the Council Plan by the end of its term.

4.11 A progress update is provided for each council plan priority in turn:

Provide affordable and high-quality housing

4.12 Providing access to safe, high-quality, and affordable homes is a cornerstone of future success for Dorset. Key actions include increasing the supply of affordable housing, improving the quality of existing homes, and using council land and assets to deliver specialist, supported, and temporary accommodation. Our targets include delivering 450 new affordable homes annually and reducing households in temporary accommodation by 30% over the next five years. We will also strengthen homelessness prevention, work with housing associations and developers, and embed sustainability in new developments to create thriving, inclusive communities.

4.13 A snapshot of delivery is available via the dashboard: all five key actions are rated green, and of eight target measures, four are green and four are amber. Future reports will include trend analysis.

	Red	Amber	Green
Key actions	-	-	5
Target measures	-	4	4

4.14 Access to good housing is fundamental to wellbeing, resilience, and inclusive growth. Dorset Council is accelerating delivery through preventative support and collaborative working, helping residents before crisis hits, reducing reliance on temporary accommodation, and unlocking new housing models. This approach is already delivering results: Dorset's homelessness prevention rate is 72%. For 2024/25, the rate was 77.5% compared to a national average of 54%.

4.15 This ambition is being delivered through the Home in on Housing (HIOH) programme, the operational delivery mechanism for the Housing Strategy, a key underpinning strategy of the Council Plan. The programme is on track and supports strategic objectives including homelessness prevention, place-based housing delivery, and improved use of council assets. It is aligned with the council's wider prevention, partnership, and place-based delivery model.

4.16 The Housing Strategy sets out four strategic objectives:

- **Housing Need-** Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs
- **Housing Supply-** Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in
- **Housing Standards**- Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes
- **Prevention of Homelessness**- Providing support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness

4.17 Delivery is supported by strong governance, including officer and member boards overseeing the HIOH programme. The officer board includes representatives from adult social care, children's services, property and assets, finance, housing, communications, ICT, and planning, and is chaired by the Corporate Director for Housing and Strategic Community Safety. The cross-party member board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health and includes task and finish groups to shape policy and delivery.

4.18 Progress against the Housing Strategy strategic objectives is summarised below:

4.19 **Housing Need**

- A Housing Power BI dashboard is nearing completion, integrating data on homelessness, temporary accommodation, housing register, lettings, and housing standards. It enables real-time insights to inform resource allocation and supports strategic planning, illustrating the effectiveness of approaches and supporting evidence-based decisions.
- A cross-council data and insight project is underway to forecast accommodation and support needs across housing, adult social care, and children's services, with plans to expand to external partners. This will provide clear evidence of gaps, identify where provision is needed, and support evidence-based decisions, joint working, and best value in service delivery.
- Housing delivery is informed by local data, community feedback, and consultation, ensuring homes are of the right size, type, and location.
- A resident feedback panel has been established to shape programme activity. Residents have been helping shape affordable housing language and guidance.
- Collaborative work with support providers has led to Dorset's first women-only rough sleeper service and new step-down accommodation. Seven women have accepted accommodation and support; five have maintained tenancies, while two have moved on or returned to the streets. Client feedback includes: *"This feels like home," "I have access to someone whenever I need it," "I feel supported.".*

4.20 **Housing Supply**

- 74 new affordable homes were completed by September 2025, with further development expected following the publication of Homes England funding prospectus on 7 November 2025.
- A pilot project using two council buildings and two land sites is underway, with homes planned to meet specific needs including accessibility and family support. Sites were included in the *Asset Disposals and Transfers* cabinet report (11 November 2025).
- A business case for a larger-scale pilot to deliver general affordable housing is nearing completion. This includes homes let at social rent levels. Sites were included in the *Asset Disposals and Transfers* cabinet report (11 November 2025) and will increase the supply of accessible, family and supported housing, informed by the housing register data and public consultation.
- The Empty Homes Strategy and its action plan was adopted by cabinet on 9 October 2025, and resource planning is now underway.

- Supported accommodation has been delivered in local communities through refurbishment and acquisition of properties for rough sleepers, families, and young people. This includes modular housing, reconfigured council properties, and market acquisitions using council and grant capital.

4.21 **Housing Standards**

- Stakeholder engagement with private landlords, registered providers, and support services has shaped delivery models and informed policy, including improved guidance identified through landlord workshops.
- Dorset Council's registered provider compliance project is also progressing. This includes developing and implementing new tenant satisfaction measures and ensuring processes are in place to tackle damp and mould for council-managed housing.
- Dorset's Afghan resettlement support pack has been adopted nationally as good practice.

4.22 **Prevention of homelessness**

- Dorset's homelessness prevention rate has increased to 72%, well above the 2024/25 national average of 54%.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation is 27% lower than the same period last year.
- A new Inclusion Tenancy Sustainment Officer is supporting residents in temporary accommodation to access health, education, and employment services. In 2025/26, this work is currently focused on smoking cessation, residents managing depression and anxiety, and social inclusion.
- A new leasing model is being procured to improve the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation, reducing reliance on bed and breakfast placements. The partner will acquire up to 100 homes and lease them to the Council, with a focus on accessible and family-sized homes.
- Reviews of temporary accommodation leases and policies are underway, with new onboarding models being implemented to ensure a balanced and fit-for-purpose portfolio. Forecasts indicate a £1 million reduction in Housing Benefit subsidy shortfall for 2025/26.

4.23 **Looking ahead to the remainder of the financial year, key activity includes:**

- Progressing council asset housing supply pilots, with delivery partners expected to be in place by year-end.
- Temporary accommodation model, leasing homes from a partner is planned for implementation by year-end.

- Cabinet to consider the development pilot business case before year-end, outlining how council land could deliver affordable housing aligned with housing register data and resident feedback.
- The following housing policies and strategies will be considered for adoption by year-end: temporary accommodation policies, the housing allocation policy, and tenancy strategy.
- Completion and embedding of the Housing Power BI dashboard, incorporating housing standards data.
- Continued focus on managing temporary accommodation and early homelessness prevention, with housing benefit subsidy shortfall forecast showing significant reduction this year.
- Progress tenant satisfaction measures for council- managed temporary housing.
- Completion of tenancy sustainment review and next steps planned by year-end.
- Sustained levels of homelessness prevention and further reductions in temporary accommodation use, including bed and breakfasts.

Respond to the climate and nature crisis

4.24 Tackling the climate and nature crisis is a key priority for Dorset Council, reflecting both the urgency of the situation and the importance placed on these twin challenges by Dorset's residents.

4.25 We are committed to creating a climate-friendly, nature-rich Dorset that can adapt and thrive. Key actions include cutting carbon emissions, restoring habitats, and supporting communities and businesses to transition to low-carbon practices. Our targets are clear: a carbon-neutral council by 2035 and a carbon-neutral county by 2045, alongside delivering a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to reverse biodiversity loss. We will also expand renewable energy generation, improve energy efficiency in homes and public buildings, promote sustainable transport, and build resilience to flooding and extreme weather, protecting lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems while driving green growth.

4.26 These efforts are already delivering measurable impact: council emissions have reduced by 31.3% since 2019/20 (7% year on year reduction), county-wide emissions have reduced by almost 19% since 2017, Dorset remains the top unitary authority for recycling performance, and significant progress has been made on delivering nature recovery.

4.27 A snapshot of delivery is available via the dashboard: of eight key actions six are rated green, two amber, and of twelve target measures, eight are green and four are amber. Future reports will include trend analysis.

	Red	Amber	Green
Key actions	-	2	6
Target measures	-	4	8

4.28 We are working with a wide range of stakeholders to embed climate and ecological considerations into council decision-making, operations, and wider council policy and public service delivery.

4.29 This joined-up approach supports wider benefits, supporting inclusive growth, public health, and community wellbeing. Dorset's leadership, in partnership with others, will make a lasting difference for generations to come.

4.30 Given the integrated approach to climate action, a number of underpinning strategies support delivery of the council plan's ambition. These include the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy, alongside the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset due for cabinet consideration on 9 December 2025. Work is also underway on further linked strategic documents, including the forthcoming Local Plan, Local Transport Plan, Energy Plan, and Climate Adaptation Strategy.

4.31 The council's work is based upon three strategic pillars:

- **Net Zero** – Cutting greenhouse gas emissions across council operations and the wider Dorset area, with net zero targets of 2035 for the Council and 2045 for Dorset.
- **Nature Recovery** – protecting and enhancing Dorset's land, rivers, and seas to support nature recovery, with a target for 30% of Dorset Council's land to be in positive management by 2030.
- **Environmental Resilience** – ensuring communities and infrastructure can adapt to unavoidable climate change, supported by the forthcoming Climate Adaptation Strategy.

4.32 Delivery is supported by strong governance, including the Climate and Ecology Operational Group, which convenes the leads of various workstreams across the organisation to monitor and coordinate action regarding the council's operations. There are also a range of place-based, area-wide and pan-regional partnerships with a broad set of public, private and community stakeholders which are critical to facilitating change across wider Dorset.

4.33 Progress against these strategic pillars is summarised below:

4.34 **Net Zero**

- Council emissions have reduced by 31.3% since 2019/20. While this is just short of the 2025 milestone target of 40%, the pace of decarbonisation has accelerated significantly, and it is expected that the reductions will exceed 40% within the next year. The council's direct emissions (scopes 1 and 2) have reduced by 35% since 2019/20 and are expected to come back within target range for next year's reporting of 2025/26.
- County-wide emissions fell to 2,095.4ktCO_2e in 2023, a reduction of 18.8% since 2017. After briefly falling short of the target trajectory in 2021/22, emissions have now come back within the target range.
- Clean energy capacity across Dorset has now reached 394.5MW, with 501MW of new projects granted planning permission in 2025 (including a 400MW battery facility).
- Solar energy generation on council buildings is expanding. A further 2.2MW of rooftop solar PV is in in the Procurement Forward Plan for delivery in 25/26 and 26/27, on top of the 6MW already installed, and with work continuing to identify further opportunities.
- Over 90 council buildings scheduled for the next phase of energy efficiency retrofit works, following the existing upgrades to over 200 council buildings.
- Low Carbon Dorset completed 7 further projects from April to October and paid over £64k in grants (leveraging £75.5k in match funding). Another 6 projects are active, 15 contracted, and 4 being processed – whilst 60 EOIs were received and 65 site visits were undertaken.
- Healthy Homes Dorset improved 441 homes in the year to March, saving residents an estimated £1.4m per year on energy bills and reducing emissions by 1.65ktCO_2e annually.
- The Solar Together Dorset group-buying scheme has launched and attracted over 1,600 registrations from residents. Installations are expected to be completed by June 2026.
- Dorset Council is actively supporting the development of the Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster, in South Dorset, which includes exploration of offshore wind, clean hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage opportunities. Dorset Innovation Park Ltd, a dedicated council-owned company, has been established to accelerate the site's transformation into a leading hub for clean energy innovation alongside advanced engineering and defence tech.
- Fleet decarbonisation is progressing well:

    - 65% of large council vehicles now run on HVO fuel, a low-carbon alternative to diesel, saving 1,600tCO_2e in 2024/25.
    - One-third of the small fleet has transitioned to electric vehicles, with further conversions planned.
- Electric vehicle infrastructure has expanded significantly, with 447 public charge points now available across Dorset, a 67% increase. A further 750 on-street chargers are planned at 300+ locations.
- A new streetlighting policy was adopted earlier this year which will reduce energy use and light pollution while improving biodiversity outcomes.
- Sustainable transport options are being promoted through enhancement of some bus routes and the Beryl e-bike scheme, which has supported over 190,000km of low-carbon journeys since launch.
- The council has adopted a new Workplace Travel Plan (2025–2030), embedding the 'Avoid, Shift, Improve' framework to reduce staff travel emissions and promote greener commuting options.

4.35 **Nature Recovery**

- The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has completed public consultation and is due to be recommended to cabinet for sign-off in December 2025. Once adopted, it will provide a county-wide framework for restoring and enhancing Dorset's natural environment.
- Dorset Council and our hosted partnerships continue to deliver a wide range of nature recovery activities, including in 2024/25:
    - Management of 171 designated nature sites and 770 hectares of land under environmental stewardship agreements.
    - Planting of 2,999 trees, creation of 3,270 metres of hedgerow, sowing of 109,112m² of wildflower seed, and creation of 5,010m² of wetland habitat.
    - Delivery of 25 natural flood management projects to reduce flood risk and improve biodiversity.
    - Removal of 78,120m² of invasive species and improvement of 9km of public rights of way to enhance access to nature.
- The Nature Recovery Dorset network continues to grow, now comprising over 230 members and almost 23,000 hectares of land. This collaborative network brings together landowners, community groups, and environmental organisations to support coordinated action.
- Dorset Council is also delivering development mitigation measures to ensure new housing and infrastructure projects contribute positively to nature. This includes:
    - 100.14 hectares of nutrient mitigation to protect sensitive water bodies.

    - 19.23 hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) to reduce recreational pressure on protected habitats.
    - Establishment of Dorset's first habitat banks at Purns Mill and Tarrant Keyneston, enabling developers to invest in long-term biodiversity gains.
- 25% of the council's farms and farmland only assets are now in a Countryside Stewardship or Sustainable Farming Incentive agreement. Sustainable farming is well embedded in the newly adopted Farms Estate Strategy, which promotes environmental improvements across council-owned farmland. Dorset farmers also benefit from the extended Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which has now been extended to March 2026 and is open for applications.
- Community and partnership action continues to play a vital role in nature recovery. Highlights include:
    - The launch of a bee conservation centre at Holloway Farm, led by the North Dorset Beekeepers Association.
    - Ongoing collaboration with Litter Free Dorset, Dorset Coast Forum, and our National Landscape Partnerships, supporting local campaigns, habitat restoration, and public engagement.

4.36 **Environmental Resilience**

- Adaptation planning is progressing to ensure Dorset is prepared for the impacts of climate change. This includes:
    - A council-wide operational risk assessment, currently underway, to identify vulnerabilities and inform service planning. A working draft should be collated by the end of 2025.
    - The establishment of a Citizens Climate Panel, bringing together a representative group of residents to co-design practical solutions for climate resilience. The panel's recommendations will be published in early 2026, helping shape the development of a Dorset Climate Adaptation Strategy, which will set out how the county can respond to environmental changes in the years ahead.
- Infrastructure resilience projects are being delivered to protect communities and natural assets from climate-related risks:
    - Restoration of the South West Coast Path near Fleet Lagoon, following damage caused by landslides and coastal erosion.
    - Harbour wall reinforcement works at West Bay and Weymouth Peninsula, improving flood protection and safeguarding key infrastructure.
    - Heathland restoration across five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in East Dorset, helping to reduce the risk and severity of wildfires while enhancing biodiversity.

- Dorset Council continues to lead in waste and recycling performance, ranking #1 in England for kerbside recycling rates at 60.5%. This reflects strong community engagement and effective service delivery.

4.37 The council's latest biannual progress report on the programme, *Climate and Nature Progress Report – Autumn/Winter 2025*, will be presented at the 20 November Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee. It provides a more detailed quantitative breakdown on key outcomes, such as the latest council and county emissions inventories.

4.38 **Looking ahead to the remainder of the financial year, key activities include:**

- Launch of a home energy campaign (Jan–Mar 2026) to help residents reduce energy bills and carbon emissions
- Commencing further work to identify on-estate renewables opportunities and commencement of works for the Solar Together scheme in wider Dorset
- Continuing ongoing delivery through our building retrofit programmes
- Progression of the Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster and Dorset Innovation Park Ltd
- Expansion of HVO fuel use across the council fleet and continued EV charger installations across Dorset
- Finalisation and launch of the sustainable procurement toolkit
- Commencement of new projects for the Green Champions staff network on the workplace travel plan
- Completion of a new climate dashboard to track emissions and target high-impact areas
- Updates to the Climate Decision Wheel
- Completion of the operational climate risk assessment
- Continued development of the Local Plan, Transport Plan, and Energy Plan to embed climate priorities
- Publication of Citizens Climate Panel recommendations and commencement of the next phase of work for a Dorset Climate Adaptation Strategy
- Finalisation and publication of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), its integration into policy and decision-making, and establishment of a monitoring framework
- Promotion of the Dorset Nature Recovery Network

Respond to the climate and nature crisis monitoring framework

4.39 Following the establishment of the Council Plan monitoring framework, a small adjustment to *one* target measure has been identified to improve reporting clarity. Details are provided in Appendix 4.

Grow our economy

4.40 We are committed to building a strong, sustainable economy that creates opportunities for businesses and residents. Our key actions include supporting high-growth sectors, improving digital and transport connectivity, expanding skills and apprenticeship programmes, and attracting investment to regenerate town centres. Targets include increasing productivity to match or exceed the national average by 2030 and reducing the skills gap through enhanced training and education pathways. We will also promote green growth, foster innovation, and work with local partners to ensure Dorset is a competitive, inclusive economy where communities and businesses thrive.

4.41 A snapshot of delivery is available via the dashboard: of eleven key actions seven are rated green, four amber, and of six target measures, two are green and four are amber. Future reports will include trend analysis.

	Red	Amber	Green
Key actions	-	4	7
Target measures	-	4	2

4.42 Dorset Council is accelerating delivery against its Economic Growth Strategy (approved by cabinet in June 2025), which serves as a key underpinning strategy for the *Grow our Economy* priority. This is being achieved through targeted investment, strategic partnerships, and place-based regeneration, supported by strengthened governance and delivery infrastructure. Recent cabinet decisions such as the creation of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, and the refreshed strategy, are translating to visible outcomes.

4.43 Key governance developments include the establishment of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd, with a Chair, Managing Director, and non-executive directors appointed. The company is now operational and developing its business plan, supported by Council officers during the transition. Cabinet has also approved the formation of the Dorset Growth Board, with governance documentation agreed and membership recruitment underway to ensure representation of Dorset's private sector employers. Dorset Council continues to play an active role in regional planning through the Wessex Economic Officers Group, contributing to shared evidence bases, growth ambitions, and wider business and partner engagement.

4.44 Visible signs of progress include site clearance and infrastructure works in Weymouth, the launch of entrepreneurship programmes, and the establishment of the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP),

approved by Visit England in May 2025. These developments reflect the Council's commitment to delivering against the seven ambitions of the Economic Growth Strategy: clean energy, innovation, regeneration of Weymouth and Portland, jobs, university and skills, market towns, and tourism.

4.45 Progress against the Economic Growth Strategy's seven ambitions are summarised below:

4.46 **Clean Energy**

- Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster was launched in May at UKREiiF - the UK's real estate and investment showcase in Leeds.
- Work has continued to raise the profile of the "Cluster" and its component opportunities, including offshore wind in the English Channel, a deepwater offshore wind hub to construct and service the renewable sector, Carbon dioxide capture and storage, clean hydrogen storage, and related opportunities to improve the electricity grid and produce green hydrogen.
- The Cluster has been showcased at events locally, regionally, and nationally, to residents, businesses, potential investors, and government.
- Masterplanning commenced for potential expansion of Dorset Innovation Park. This would provide more land for clean energy or other employment, including opening up a part of Dorset's only designated Enterprise Zone which is currently not available for businesses to invest in.
- On 11 November, Cabinet approved a proposal for a clean energy partnership, including a 50-megawatt solar project on Dorset Council land at Higher South Buckland Farm, Chickerell. The decision establishes a strategic partnership with renewable energy developer Source Galileo to progress the scheme.

4.47 **Innovation**

- Dorset Innovation Park Ltd is preparing its business plan and developing relationships with investors, tenants, and skills providers.
- Shared Prosperity Fund grants have been awarded to fund research and development for a Dorset telecoms company and for a Dorset forestry business to expand and boost exports.

4.48 **Regeneration of Weymouth and Portland**

- Demolition and site clearance at the Weymouth Bowl site makes the site ready for redevelopment.

- Harbour wall repairs and replacement at the Harbour Peninsula. This work needs to be completed so that the sites are ready for redevelopment
- Events such as “Pathway to Prosperity” and “Energising Dorset’s Economy” have engaged residents and businesses in shaping Dorset’s economic future, particularly in Chesil, Portland, and Weymouth.
- Cabinet approved the establishment of a Strategic Regeneration Partnership to accelerate delivery of the Weymouth 2040 vision. Willmott Dixon, in collaboration with Milligan, will lead the development of a commercial masterplan, feasibility studies, and a strategic business plan for six key council-owned sites. This partnership aims to unlock public and private investment, attract inward investment, and transform Weymouth into a thriving coastal destination with new homes, jobs, cultural spaces, and improved public realm.

4.49 **Jobs**

- Young Enterprise entrepreneurship courses launched in areas with low social mobility in Weymouth and Portland to raise aspirations and support future employment.
- Dorset-based defence companies are reporting growing order books and potential expansion, with council officers working to enable new job opportunities.
- Opportunities for high-quality employment are being promoted through active participation in the Dorset Engineering and Manufacturing Cluster and regional sector groups such as the South West Regional Defence and Security Cluster and Maritime South West.
- The Dorset Connect to Work scheme was approved by cabinet in October 2025, which will help people overcome barriers to employment, including those with disabilities.
- Business Growth Dorset continues to provide advice, financial assistance, and productivity support to small and medium size companies.
- Dorset Chamber has been commissioned to lead the development of the Get BCP and Dorset Working plan, alongside partners in the NHS and Department for Work and Pensions, with an aspiration to get 80% of the working age population into employment. This is supported by a strategic partnership with Dorset Chamber and includes delivery of multiple business support programmes.
- Strategic partnerships established with Dorset Chamber, Portland Port, clean energy promoters, and regional sector clusters aimed at promoting Dorset as a place to do businesses and to make investment.
- Dorset Growth Board governance approved, with membership recruitment underway. Invitations were issued in November 2025.

- Participation in the Wessex Economic Officers Group, contributing to shared evidence base and regional growth ambitions.

4.50 **University and Skills**

- Entrepreneurship programmes and regeneration work are targeted at areas with historic economic disadvantage and social mobility challenges.
- Working with Plymouth and Exeter Universities on the development of a bid to the UK Research and Innovation Local Innovation Partnerships Fund, with aspirations to bring university research and business support to the Dorset Innovation Park.
- The first upskilling grants using Shared Prosperity Fund were awarded in October 2025.
- The first in-person and online pre-start and Start-Up courses using Shared Prosperity Funding ran in October 2025.
- Dorset Business Mentors celebrated its 20th anniversary: 132 Dorset businesses are currently benefiting from mentoring delivered by Dorset business leaders.
- DC-hosted Business Growth Dorset's Scale Up Finance, Scale Up Growth, and Scale Up Smart Tech Courses have all been commissioned and are now in place.
- Supporting our high streets growth programme and support for businesses and social enterprise is being delivered by Dorset Chamber.
- 250 Dorset businesses have received support from DC Shared prosperity Fund and Business Growth Dorset -funded activity.
- Work on the new Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan, led by Dorset Chamber, has commenced.
- The Dorset system is advancing a transformative initiative to establish an Allied Health Professional University in Weymouth, designed to address future workforce needs in health and care services. This proposal has emerged from collaborative discussions with the Health Sciences University (HSU) and key regional stakeholders, including NHS partners, Weymouth College, Care Dorset, Dorset Healthcare, Dorset County Hospital Federation, and the council. A Strategic Outline Case has received cabinet approval, with agreement to progress to a Full Business Case.
- Funding has already been allocated to develop a Dental Faculty in Weymouth, reinforcing the commitment to health education in the region.

4.51 **Market Towns**

- The Council is embedding economic resilience into local plans, ensuring communities are better prepared for future economic shocks.
- Development of place branding for Weymouth and Dorset to promote local strengths and attract investment.
- Draft Market and Coastal Towns Framework has been circulated to town and parish councils to support local Economic Action Plans. Ongoing engagement with Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) is shaping the rollout.

4.52 **Tourism**

- Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) governance established in partnership with the Dorset Tourism Association.
- Outputs of the LVEP have been tourism articles in the national press: VisitEngland has referred journalists to Visit Dorset through the LVEP.
- Planning approvals for energy-efficient hotels reflect a proactive approach to inclusive growth and future-proofing the visitor economy.
- Work has commenced on the production of a Visitor Economy strategy.

4.53 **Looking ahead to the remainder of the financial year, key activities include:**

- Final publication of the Market and Coastal Towns Framework expected in December 2025.
- Launch of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd's business plan and investment prospectus.
- Rollout of all levels of the Business Engagement offer outlined in the Economic Growth Strategy, providing appropriate support for Dorset's wide variety of businesses.
- Further development of the Clean Energy Super Cluster, including feasibility work on hydrogen and offshore wind.
- Development of a new Destination Management Plan as part of the LVEP.
- Next phase of development for the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan, considering consultation feedback and the updated evidence base.

Communities for All

4.54 We are committed to creating thriving, inclusive communities where everyone can access opportunities and support. Our key actions include strengthening locality-based working, improving educational attainment, expanding apprenticeship opportunities, and supporting care leavers into education, employment, or training. Targets include raising Key Stage 2 attainment to

meet or exceed the national average by 2029 and increasing care leaver engagement in education, employment and training to 65%. We will also pursue age-friendly accreditation, deliver care closer to home, promote economic inclusion, and work with the voluntary sector to provide joined-up, preventative services that reduce inequalities and help people live well in their communities.

4.55 At the point of adoption, the cross-cutting theme of partnership within the Communities for All priority was intended to be shaped through co-design. This approach has been progressed through the Community Partnerships Programme, established March 2025, and continues to make strong headway in building the foundations for more collaborative, place-based working across Dorset. Developed in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), Town and Parish Councils (T&PC), and Dorset Council directorates, the programme is delivering against key priorities including double devolution, strengthened principles for partnership working, and to deliver more joined up, services in communities.

4.56 Progress is reflected across three core strands of the programme, each aligned to a strategic priority:

4.57 **Priority 1: To be more active in local communities.**
By listening to local residents and working with town and parish councils and the VCS, the programme is exploring who is best placed to deliver local support and services.

- Engagement events with T&PCs have supported the development of both the double devolution framework and proposals for area forums. Notably, the Leader and Chief Executive participated in the flagship Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) Bi-Annual meeting, signalling a renewed commitment to partnership working and presenting key programme updates.
- A dedicated T&PC group has scoped potential services for inclusion in the double devolution framework, with strong appetite for a test-and-learn approach to devolving services and assets.
- While momentum remains strong, recruitment is underway to accelerate progress within the double devolution area, reflecting the shared ambition of Dorset Council and its partners to move at pace.
- A pilot approach for area forums is in development for delivery in early 2026, led by review of current models, community engagement and local decision making.

4.58 **Priority 2: To become a better partner.**
To deliver effectively with partners, the programme is focused on strengthening the foundations of service delivery, resourcing, and co-design mechanisms.

- The development of a joint implementation plan on enhanced working between DAPTC and Dorset Council.
- The development of a co-designed Statement of Reasonable Expectations, outlining shared commitments to communication, collaboration, and mutual respect between Dorset Council and town and parish councils.
- Mapping of the council's financial provision for the voluntary and community sector has been completed, providing a foundation for future policy development and more effective and streamlined funding.

4.59 **Priority 3: To bring teams together working closer with partners in communities.**
As new ways of delivering services closer to neighbourhoods are developed, the programme is supporting stronger collaboration between council teams and community partners.

- Mapping of existing locality delivery models and current service changes in Adults, Children's, Libraries, and Public Health has been completed to inform the design of future place-based pilot initiatives.
- A draft Place-Based Partnership Prospectus has been developed and shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board, setting out a partnership approach to co-design and delivery of programmes which contribute to a Health and Wellbeing Board strategy and outcomes framework.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board has agreed to refresh its strategy to reflect the Place-Based Partnership and new requirements, including a neighbourhood health delivery plan in collaboration with NHS Dorset
- Work is underway to develop the Place-Based Partnership delivery plan that aligns strategic programmes such as family hubs, Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, and FutureCare to a single outcomes framework.

4.60 Looking ahead to the remainder of the financial year, the Community Partnerships programme will focus on consolidating its foundational work and transitioning into delivery, the following key actions are planned:

- The double devolution business case will be finalised and presented for Cabinet consideration in early 2026, enabling a structured approach to devolving services and assets to T&PCs and community organisations.
- Pilots for place-based models of delivery will be launched, supporting more joined-up working in local communities.

- Confirmation of pilot locations for area forums to test and learn approaches to neighbourhood governance.
- Embedding the ways of working with Town and Parish Councils outlined in the Statement of Reasonable Expectations (subject to ongoing development).
- A Community of Practice will be established to support learning and consistency in community-led engagement and neighbourhood delivery, helping to enhance Dorset Council's transition towards community empowerment and local decision making.
- Agree an outcomes framework and delivery priorities for Place-Based Partnerships via the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Present the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for adoption.

4.61 **Age Friendly**

Dorset Council has achieved a key milestone within the Communities for All priority, securing accreditation as an Age-Friendly County with the Centre for Ageing Better, the programme is now progressing towards World Health Organisation (WHO) membership. This commitment reflects Dorset's demographic reality, nearly one-third of residents are aged 65 or over and underlines our ambition to create inclusive communities that support people of all ages, disability and background to enjoy life as they age.

4.62 The Age Friendly Communities programme is embedding WHO principles across council strategies, service design, and infrastructure planning. This includes integration into adult social care locality practice, commissioning, and wider planning considerations, as well as influencing transport, housing, and public spaces through the Council's Commissioning and Community Partnerships Programmes. Engagement with local charities, businesses, and town and parish councils is underway to promote age-friendly approaches, support inter-generational participation and strengthen community partnerships.

4.63 Current activity includes public engagement running from October to December 2025, seeking residents' views on ageing in Dorset and priorities for action across the eight WHO domains—such as housing, transport, and social participation. Feedback will inform Dorset's Age Friendly Action Plan, with the first report due in Spring 2026. The engagement also invites residents to join the Age Friendly Network, become ambassadors, and participate in reference groups, ensuring lived experience shapes delivery.

4.64 Age-friendly principles are designed for everyone, not just older residents. They create inclusive, accessible environments that improve quality of life across all generations:

- Safer, walkable communities benefit families, children, and people with disabilities.
- Improved transport and housing design support independence at every stage of life.
- Social participation initiatives foster intergenerational connections and reduce isolation for all age groups.
- Accessible communication and public spaces enhance civic engagement and wellbeing for the whole community.

4.65 By enabling older residents to remain active, connected, and independent, the programme aims to reduce future demand on health and care services, improve wellbeing. It also aligns with NHS priorities and adult social care commissioning strategies, offering a community-led approach to ageing well.

Prevention and Early Intervention

4.66 Dorset's achievements in securing Age-Friendly County accreditation marks a major milestone in our prevention agenda. Prevention and early intervention are embedded across People Services and act as a key enabler in delivering the ambition of Communities for All.

4.67 Adult Social Care services are designed to help people live well at home, stay connected to their communities, and avoid unnecessary reliance on statutory care. This approach improves outcomes for residents while supporting a sustainable health and care system across Dorset.

4.68 In October 2025, we launched a Prevention and Early Intervention Team within the council's customer contact centre. This team includes occupational therapists who help people access reablement and avoid unnecessary long-term care. The Building Independence and Strengths Assessment (BISA) identifies challenges and uses equipment, home adaptations, and technology-enabled care to delay formal care. Enhanced information and advice at the service's front door, through QR codes in GP practices, community postcards, and digital care cost calculators, has already delivered impact. Since 2024, waiting lists for Care Act assessments have reduced by 40%, and independence outcomes have improved. The new team will further enhance outcomes by supporting more people to maintain independence at first contact and managing demand through to Community Teams.

4.69 Dorset Council works closely with town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and health partners through forums such as the Carer Provider Forums and Our Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS). The ICS brings together NHS organisations, local authorities, and voluntary and community partners to deliver joined-up health and social care across Dorset.

4.70 A key ICS-led programme, FutureCare, aims to reduce hospital delays, improve recovery at home, and avoid long-term care admissions. It's four workstreams are:

- Transfer of Care Hubs at Dorset County Hospital and University Hospital Dorset, coordinating discharge planning by bringing health, social care, and VCS partners together to start planning earlier and remove barriers to timely discharge
- Alternatives to Admission via Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC)
- Home-Based Intermediate Care with personalised reablement plans. The FutureCare Reablement App enables residents to set goals and track progress, improving independence and freeing capacity for others.
- Bed-Based Intermediate Care, reducing average length of stay from 36.7 to 31.9 days

4.71 Joint commissioning and planning are underway for intermediate care beds and housing adaptations linked to reablement. Integrated Neighbourhood Teams are being developed as part of FutureCare to support long-term, place-based care planning.

4.72 Community-based initiatives continue to help people stay well, independent, and connected. New contracts with Carer Support Dorset, Help & Care, and MYTIME Young Carers provide befriending, peer groups, wellbeing coaching, and training. Transition support for young carers reaching adulthood is delivered jointly with Children's Services. Emotional support and crisis prevention are delivered through Leonardo Counselling, which supported 98 carers with 600 hours of counselling last year. Hospital discharge support through the Dorset Integrated Prevention Partnership (DIPPs) identifies carers early in discharge lounges and wards, providing tailored advice, equipment, and contingency planning to prevent breakdown of care arrangements.

4.73 People services are being strengthened through co-designed and co-delivered services. The Bridgit digital platform, developed with carers, enables self-assessments, personalised plans, and direct links to GP and support services. Children's Services also work in partnership with health and education providers to deliver integrated support and engagement. Children and families are actively shaping services through Family Advisory Boards, "Let's Talk" events, and youth-led networks such as The Network (for care-experienced young people) and Dorset Unstoppables (for children with SEND).

4.74 Children's Services remain at the forefront of national social care reform, working in close partnership with the Department for Education (DfE) and supporting other local authorities to deliver system-wide improvements in line with the Families First Partnership Programme. In March 2025, Ofsted rated Children's Services "Outstanding" in the ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) and in May, Dorset became the first UK unitary authority to embed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into its policies, reinforcing a culture of respect, inclusion, and child-centred decision-making.

4.75 The service's strategic focus is on early intervention, service integration, and partnership-led delivery to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

4.76 A new Early Help Strategy will be published shortly. It promotes early, joined-up support through Family Hubs - nine now operational, and two more in development, offering holistic services including perinatal mental health, parenting, and SEND advice. The service's Integrated Front Door ensures coordinated responses across social care, education, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and 0–19 services, with CAMHS increasing its focus on access for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

4.77 The transformation of mental health services for children and young people is underway, in partnership with NHS Dorset. The new i-THRIVE model removes referral thresholds, enables self-referral, and expands early help and crisis support, with phased rollout from 2026.

4.78 To deliver on our ambition to be the best Corporate Parent, the Corporate Parenting Board focuses on five priority areas identified by care-experienced young people: safety, education, emotional wellbeing, independence, and identity. A new Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Strategy is in development, and the Children in Care health dashboard and tracker is now live. Advocacy and the Mind of My Own app' rollout is progressing and a Safe Space Charter and Youth Friendly Pride events are established. Youth Voice attends informal corporate parenting board meetings to drive forward actions and accountability.

4.79 We have opened new accommodation for care leavers, including a crash pad and the Leon Project, to add to our self-contained flats for care leavers in Weymouth, and we have thirty-seven care leavers in Staying Put arrangements and 20 accessing Staying Close support.

4.80 Currently 73.3% of care leavers aged 17–25 are in education, employment, or training, well above the Council Plan's 65% target. This has been achieved through a whole-council approach, mentoring, and expanded pathways, including 10 apprenticeship opportunities delivered in partnership with

Weymouth College and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and guaranteed interviews across all directorates.

4.81 Education outcomes are improving, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Collaborative projects between the council and schools have led to a 4% increase in combined Reading, Writing, and Maths outcomes in participating schools.

4.82 Attainment for children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) has improved and compares favourably to national figures:

- Early Years Good Level of Development is in line with national
- KS2 reading is 1% above national (increase of 9% since last year)
- KS2 writing is 1% above national (increase of 8%)
- KS2 mathematics is 1% above national (increase of 9%)
- KS4 English 5+ is 2% above national (increase of 2%)
- KS4 Mathematics 5+ is 1% above national (increase of 1%)

4.83 Significant investment continues in SEND provision, with over 250 new special school places and 144 new inclusion hub places created through capital funding. These hubs reduce travel, improve outcomes, and support mainstream schools.

4.84 To reduce Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) rates, a new transition support project is targeting Year 11 students, alongside the work of the pan-Dorset Careers Hub. A multi-agency group under the Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People is strengthening post-16 transitions.

4.85 The Virtual School partnership is strengthened with termly monitoring and Personal Education Plan Quality Assurance. Apprenticeship and Education, Employment and Training (EET) pathways have been expanded; including NHS taster days delivered. Virtual school and trauma-informed training introduced in schools.

Communities for All Monitoring Framework

4.86 The *Communities for All* priority, as originally drafted, set a clear direction of travel with the expectation that further definition would emerge through co-design. That clarity has now been achieved through the work outlined above, enabling an update to the monitoring framework to improve reporting. See Appendix 4.

Strategic planning

4.87 Each priority progress update highlights the key strategies and policies that underpin effective delivery. When the Council Plan was adopted, an emerging

strategy and policy framework was published. This framework has since evolved and can now be updated to reflect new strategies, demonstrating a stronger and more mature alignment with the Council Plan's priorities. Appendix 3.

4.88 There is a golden thread running from the Council Plan, through the principal and enabling strategies, through service plans, which are updated annually and set out the operational requirements for delivery, and through to individual employee objectives. This ensures that all our planning is aligned with our vision and priorities.

Conclusion

4.89 Common enabling themes underpin the delivery of all four Council Plan priorities. These include place-based delivery in partnership with others, delivering services in the spaces that matter to our communities; a strong prevention agenda to address needs early; and a commitment to transform into the council we aspire to be. Further work will integrate these strands into a framework that moves beyond the foundational stage and enables joined-up, comprehensive delivery of the Council Plan.

Next Report

4.90 The next report will share this "framework" and provide an annual review of Council Plan performance and organisational health, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data. It will showcase achievements and highlight areas needing further focus to ensure safe delivery of our ambitions. Publication is scheduled for Summer 2026.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The Council Plan sets out clear priorities that the council is committed to delivering, and non-delivery is not an option. While these priorities are fixed, there is flexibility in how they are achieved. Options relating to delivery methods, scale of ambition, and pace will be considered through established governance processes, in line with internal procedures and the council's Constitution.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. It provides a summary of progress, with due legal consideration applied to activities undertaken to date, and this will continue to apply to all future planned activity.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, which provides a summary of progress in delivering the Council Plan. Financial decisions are taken in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and the Council's Constitution, with robust budget monitoring in place.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The Council Plan sets out the ambition to tackle the climate and nature emergency. There are no direct implications arising from this report, which provides a summary of progress in delivering the Council Plan. Dorset Council uses the Climate Decision Wheel within governance processes and committee reports to help policy makers understand climate and ecological impacts of proposals and inform decision-making.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The Council Plan includes an ambition to improve well-being and health outcomes through the Communities for All priority, with interconnected benefits and contributing factors delivered across the other three priorities. There are no direct implications arising from this report, which provides a summary of progress in delivering the Council Plan.

10. Other implications

10.1 N/A

11. Risk implications

11.1 When the Council Plan was adopted, eleven principal risks were introduced, these serve as categories of risk requiring ongoing vigilance, planning and preparedness. These principal risks are embedded within the Risk Management Framework and risk appetite statement.

12.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report, which provides a summary of progress in delivering the Council Plan. Risk is managed at all levels of the organisation in accordance with the Risk Management Framework, with due consideration applied to activities undertaken to date and continuing for all future decisions.

12. Equalities

12.1 When the Council Plan was adopted, five organisational behaviours were introduced, placing inclusion at its core. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy guides this work, and Equality Impact Assessments are completed where relevant to support informed decision-making. There are no direct

implications arising from this report, which provides a summary of progress in delivering the Council Plan. Due consideration of equalities has been applied to activities undertaken to date and will continue for all future decisions.

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1 Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring Framework
- Appendix 2 Council Plan delivery case studies
- Appendix 3 Updated Strategy and Policy Framework
- Appendix 4 Updated Council Plan Monitoring Framework
    - Respond to the climate and nature crisis
    - Communities for All

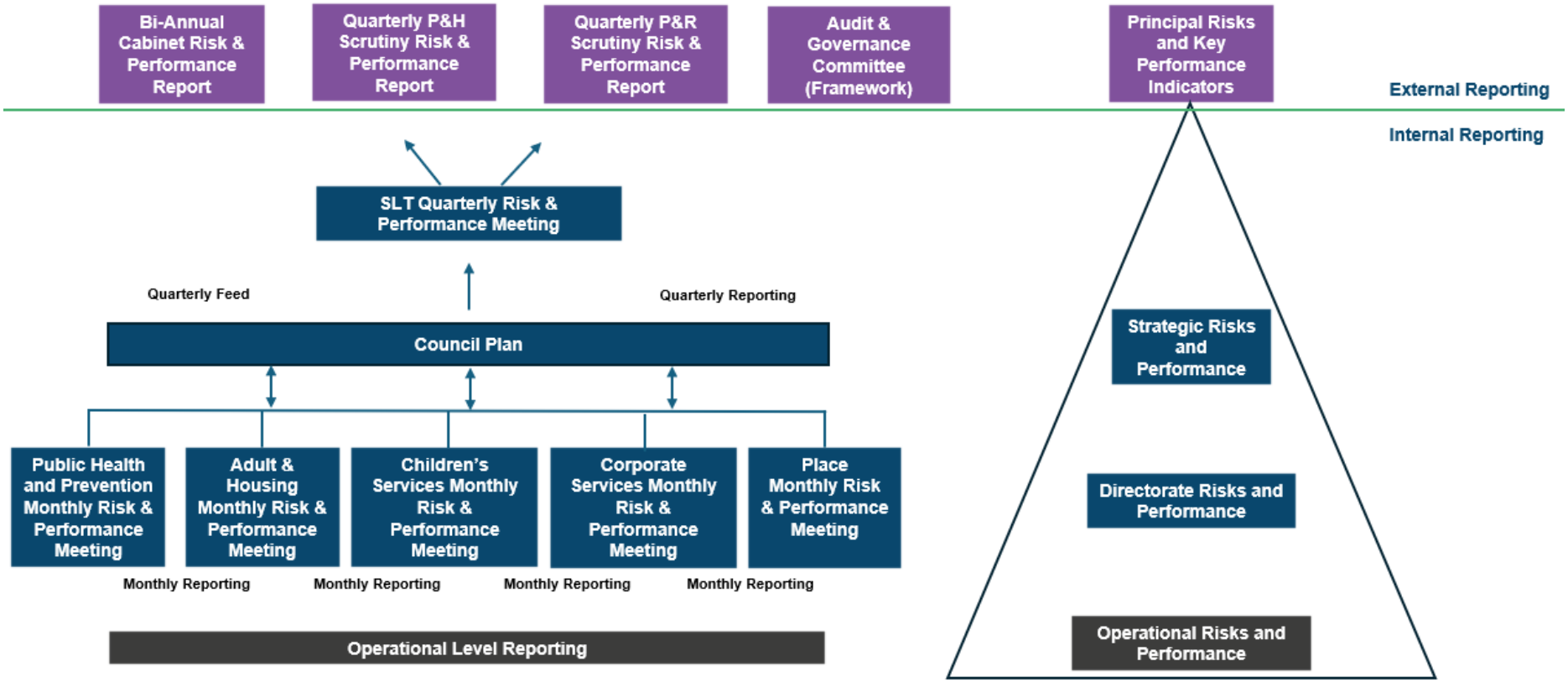
14. Background papers

- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Q1 Performance Update, 17 November 2025
- Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee, Q1 Performance Update, 11 December 2025.
- Audit and Governance, Risk Management Update, 13 October 2025

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1: Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring Framework



Appendix 2: Case Studies

Provide affordable and high-quality housing:

Case Study: West Farm – Supporting Young Adults at Risk of Homelessness

Historic West Farm in Dorset has been transformed into a safe and supportive home for young adults aged 18–25 who are at risk of homelessness. This innovative project, led by Dorset Council in partnership with Salvation Army Homes, provides six bedrooms in a renovated farmhouse and two move-on flats nearby, offering both stability and a pathway to independence.

The scheme delivers 24/7 wraparound support, helping residents develop essential life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and managing a home. Trauma-informed design and sustainability features, including solar panels and bat roosting spaces, ensure the environment promotes wellbeing and respects heritage.

Funding for the project came from Dorset Council, Homes England, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with additional contributions from IKEA for kitchen equipment and design support.

West Farm's success demonstrates the impact of collaborative investment in tackling homelessness. By combining housing with skills development, the project is giving young people the confidence and tools they need to build brighter futures.

Grow Our Economy:

Case Study: Honeybuns Bakery –UKSPF Grants

Holwell-based Honeybuns Bakery, known for its premium handmade gluten-free cakes, flapjacks, and brownies, has grown from humble beginnings in 1998 to employing 23 people today. To support its expansion, Honeybuns accessed three UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grants totalling over £40,000, matched by the business.

The funding enabled the purchase of essential machinery, including an automatic cake slicing machine, which removed a production bottleneck and boosted productivity. These investments have strengthened the bakery's resilience and positioned it for future growth.

Honeybuns' success demonstrates the impact of Dorset Council's UKSPF grants, which have distributed £6.4 million to over 100 businesses since launch, helping create high-skilled jobs and drive local economic growth.

Communities for All:

Case Study: Supporting Care Leavers into Employment and Training

Dorset Council is committed to improving education, employment, and training (EET) outcomes for care leavers through a tailored support model. Each young person has access to a dedicated Personal Advisor (PA) for EET and a PA mentor linked to the employment pathway team. The *Pathways to Employment* programme currently supports 9 care leavers in Council apprenticeships, with plans to create 10 more positions by 2026.

Over the past two years, partnerships with employers such as Hall and Woodhouse, John Lewis, and Wessex Water have provided apprenticeships, employment, and work experience. These collaborations have helped 4 young people secure jobs with Hall and Woodhouse, while 3 others participated in John Lewis's *Building Happier Futures* programme, resulting in 2 employment opportunities. Additional placements included 2 work experience roles with the Merlin Group, leading to 2 seasonal jobs. Sky has provided free broadband packages, and a DfE-funded mentoring scheme is in place. These initiatives are breaking down barriers and enabling care leavers to gain skills, confidence, and sustainable employment.

Respond to the Climate and Nature Crisis:

At the heart of Dorset Council's clean power ambition is solar energy. The council has successfully installed 6MW of solar PV across 113 buildings, including schools, libraries, leisure centres, offices, and care homes. This deployment generates an estimated 4.6 million kWh of clean electricity annually, saving £520,000 per year on energy costs and significantly reducing carbon emissions.

This achievement represents a fundamental shift in how Dorset Council powers its operations and has contributed to a 46% reduction in its annual grid electricity demand and a 45% reduction in its annual carbon emissions from buildings. By turning rooftops into energy assets, the council is supporting green jobs in the county, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and cutting bills.

Appendix 3: Strategy and Policy Framework

	Provide high-quality and affordable housing	Grow our economy	Communities for all	Respond to the climate and nature crisis
Principal Strategies	Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 **New:** Empty Homes Strategy Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Tenancy Strategy *(in development)* Housing Allocation Policy *(in development)* Temporary accommodation policy *(in development)*	**New:** Economic Growth Strategy Visitor Economy Strategy *(in development)*	Children, Young People and Families' Plan Early Help Strategy *(in development)* Education Strategy Adult Social Care in Dorset A better life for adults' A better life for carers Health and Wellbeing Strategy Cultural Strategy Dorset Library Strategy	Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset *(in development)* **New:** Farms Estate Strategy **New**: EV Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy Climate Adaptation Strategy *(in development)* *Energy Plan (in development)* Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Dorset
Enabling strategies	Medium Term Financial Plan **New:** Risk Management Framework Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Transformation Plan **New:** People and Culture Strategy Local Plan & Local Transport Plan *(in development)* Strategic Asset Management Plan Customer Strategy Digital Infrastructure and Inclusion Strategy			

Appendix 4: Updated Council Plan Monitoring Framework

Respond to the Climate and Nature Crisis Monitoring Framework

Respond to the Climate and Nature Crisis: Target Measure

Respond to the Climate and Nature Crisis Target Measures	Monitoring Framework
15,000 hectares of Dorset are covered by Landscape Recovery management agreements by 2030 (currently 0 hectares)	79,000 hectares of land Dorset contributes to nature recovery through the Nature Recovery Dorset network by 2030

Communities for All Monitoring Framework

Communities for All: Target Measures

Communities for All Target Measures	Monitoring Framework
a joined-up model of locality working, delivering through prevention and partnership: measures to be agreed with local partners and linked back to our priorities and the work of the NHS, the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership	To develop and adopt, through the Place-Based Partnership, an Outcomes Framework which achieves delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy.
improve educational attainment by working through leadership in the education community: increase Dorset's Key Stage 2 results (55% in 2024) to be as good or better than the national average levels by 2029 (60% in 2024)	Increase Dorset's Key Stage 2 results (55% in 2024) to meet or exceed the national average (60% in 2024) by 2029.
transfer up to £500k a year of Dorset Council's apprenticeship levy to increase the number of apprenticeships offered by local businesses and organisations	Transfer up to £500k/year of Dorset Council's apprenticeship levy to increase apprenticeships offered by local businesses and organisations

Communities for All Target Measures	Monitoring Framework
be the best Corporate Parent that we can for our children in care and care leavers. Improve levels of engagement in employment, education, and training among our care leavers to 65% through provision of good, stable, and consistent care and accommodation, good multi-agency wraparound support, and a sufficient number and range of opportunities	Improve care leaver engagement in employment, education, and training (EET) to 65%
seek internationally recognised accreditation as an 'age-friendly' county	Progress towards membership of WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. (Centre for Ageing Better Age Friendly accreditation has been secured).
work specifically with those groups at higher risk, including supporting unpaid carers, those ageing without children and those ageing alone	Delivery progress against the Age Friendly Action Plan (once finalised)
increase the number of age and disability friendly environments to enable people to stay in the homes they want for longer, reducing the proportion of people in traditional care settings, as well as creating all-age friendly environments, equally accessible by young parents with pushchairs as they are to older people with walkers or disabled people	Proportion of people supported to remain living independently away from a traditional care setting.

Communities for All- Key Actions

Communities for All Key Actions	Monitoring Actions
prevention and early help: listen to and involve residents in decisions about their health and wellbeing, and care and support needs. Use data to better understand current needs and identify potential issues before they become problems. We will make changes when needed to improve people's outcomes, access or experience, to improve equity and reduce inequalities in health	**Develop and implement a refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy** that uses data and resident engagement to identify and address emerging health and wellbeing needs at an early stage guided by Dorset's Place Based Partnership.
thriving communities: work more closely with town and parish councils and with voluntary and community sector organisations to support residents, investing in the infrastructure	**Establish a framework for local partnerships** including Area Forums, through co-design and test-and-learn approaches in neighbourhoods. These should strengthen collaboration with town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sector and ensure local need and decision making guides investment in community infrastructure and improves local support.
work better together: put people's and communities' needs at the heart of how we plan care and support. Work with Integrated Care System partner organisations to provide care as close as possible to those who need it. We value the strength of voluntary and community organisations in this partnership	**Develop locality-based commissioning models**, empowering communities to co-design services and manage devolved funding aligned to community need.
commissioning and procurement: co-design and deliver with communities and partners on a locality basis, devolving funding to neighbourhoods where appropriate	See row above.

Communities for All Key Actions	Monitoring Actions
change the culture: focus on people first and act on feedback about quality of services and experience	**Implement a continuous feedback and learning system**, supported by technology, to capture resident experiences and insights and inform service improvements across all areas.
simplify our approach to communities so it is consistent: a more joined-up and coherent model of place-based working, building on existing arrangements, developing strong relationships locally, and using existing assets in communities, such as libraries and family hubs. This will be built into our new target operating model (this sets out how we will introduce new ways of working with residents and communities)	**Develop and publish a place-based model of service delivery**, simplifying how we work with communities and better meet resident needs by maximising the use of council assets, such as libraries and family hubs, to deliver services at the heart of local communities.
strengthen and simplify the connection between Dorset Council and the voluntary and community sector through an active assembly, including simplifying access to funding	**In partnership with the NHS, support an active VCS Assembly**, underpinned by a streamlined policy approach to partnership working and simplified access to funding
engage with people closer to home, with dignity and respect: be honest about options and involve people in decisions	**Place the user experience at the centre of adult care provision by involving people in decisions, presenting options honestly, and acting on feedback**. Use of the practice audit feedback tool, statutory surveys and lived experience forum feedback to inform service design and ensure transparent reflections on quality and experience.
support people of working age who are economically inactive to address barriers to employment	***Help more working-age residents into employment by tackling barriers through targeted skills development, digital inclusion, and local employment pathways****—aligned with Dorset Council's Economic Growth Strategy*

Communities for All Key Actions	Monitoring Actions
devolve or transfer more assets to communities to enable creation of local hubs where people can access support and care	**Develop and implement a Double Devolution Framework** to empower communities through the transferring of assets and services to Town and Parish Councils support local service delivery
through the collective efforts to deliver on the Council plan priorities of 'provide high-quality housing', 'grow our economy', and 'communities for all, we aim to improve social mobility and reduce poverty in the Dorset Council area	**Track Dorset's social mobility** through Social Mobility Commission data (when released). **Poverty** to be tracked through Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data set: "Households below 60% of the median household income" (reviewing both before housing costs and after housing costs).

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Cabinet

9 December 2025

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy December 2025

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):
All councillors
Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Bridget Betts, Environment, Policy & Partnership Manager
Email: bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 The Environment Act 2021 introduces Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) as a new system of spatial strategies for nature in England. These strategies, created at a county level by responsible authorities, will map out actions needed to restore nature, working with local stakeholders. The LNRS will play a crucial role in delivering Biodiversity Net Gain and meeting national environmental targets. Dorset's LNRS will be part of the network of LNRSs covering the whole of England, with no gaps or overlaps, contributing to national environmental objectives and targets.

1.2 Dorset's LNRS is co-produced, led by Dorset Council as Responsible Authority alongside supporting authorities, BCP Council and Natural England, and working with large numbers of stakeholders. It provides a comprehensive framework for restoring nature across the whole of Dorset and has a series of maps that will help target efforts to achieve the greatest gains for nature and the wider environment.

1.3 Dorset Council has made climate and nature recovery a key priority, with its Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023–2025 supporting this collective plan for nature recovery across the county.

1.4 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the final publication approval of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), following

completion of public consultation and formal support of BCP Council and Natural England.

2. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet:

2.1 Approves the final Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy for publication, recognising its role as a statutory framework for nature recovery across the county.

2.2 Commits to integrating the LNRS into relevant council policies and decision-making, including planning, land management, climate adaptation, and public health and supporting the ongoing delivery of the LNRS.

2.3 Acknowledges and thanks the contributions from stakeholders, including BCP Council, Natural England, community groups, farmers, landowners and residents, in shaping the strategy through the development and consultation phase.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure Dorset Council formally meets the DEFRA requirements as set out by the Environment Act 2021 that supports and integrates the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a statutory framework for reversing biodiversity decline, enhancing climate resilience, and guiding sustainable land use across the county.

4. The report

4.1 Local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) present a system of spatial management for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Environment Act 2021. Each LNRS must

- Agree priorities for nature's recovery
- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Map specific proposals and potential activities for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals

The Dorset LNRS is available in appendix 1 and maps in the link provided in appendix 2.

4.2 Defra published LNRS Statutory Guidance and Regulations on 23/03/23.These documents outline our role as a Responsible Authority (RA) and the rules we must follow, as well as the step-by-step process for LNRS preparation.

4.3 Dorset Council is the Responsible Body that is leading in the preparation of Dorset's LNRS, with BCP Council and Natural England as the supporting authorities.

4.4 Work started on the Dorset LNRS in July 2023 and has involved working with over 76 organisations and engaging with over 1375 people at workshops, events, county shows etc. across a wide range of sectors and organisations.

4.5 The public consultation ran for 12 weeks between 7 May and 30 July with 375 responses, mainly from individuals. The results of these findings and the consultation response can be found in the two reports appendix 3 and 4.

4.6 Achieving nature recovery requires a shared vision, agreed priorities and collective action. The strategy set a clear direction and ambition for the Dorset area – (DC and BCP Council area) with the commitment to reverse the decline in nature.

4.7 The Dorset LNRS contains 13 nature recovery priorities, supported by detailed management activities. Plus 56 priority species identified as needing bespoke activities to ensure they remain or return to Dorset. Together, these tools ensure a strategic, collective and effective approach to nature recovery across the county**.**

4.8 The strategy promotes nature recovery through biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation schemes, environmental land management schemes, community-driven and individual projects.

4.9 From the work, the initiative Nature Recovery Dorset has been created which is a celebration of collaboration, uniting individuals, communities, and

organisations in a shared mission to restore and protect the county's landscapes.

4.10 The Defra guidance states that progress will be monitored through a review process led by Dorset Council, which will assess achievements every three to ten years. This process will evaluate completed activities and their impacts, supported by existing monitoring initiatives that track habitats, species, and enabling measures. These insights will help refine and strengthen ongoing efforts, ensuring the strategy remains adaptive and effective.

4.11 The Dorset LNRS represents the work and refinement across all of the LNRS groups and the engagement. There are several supporting documents detailing some of the methodology and wider pressures and opportunities.

4.12 One of the key actions in Dorset Council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023–2025 is to create a local nature recovery strategy, a commitment reinforced by the Council's declaration of a nature emergency in July 2024, placing nature's recovery at the heart of its plans.

4.13 Local nature recovery strategies are intended as a tool to help Local Planning Authorities continue delivering on requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity.

4.14 Local planning authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the local nature recovery strategy. The strategy will therefore be used alongside other evidence and planning requirements to inform plan making and in the determination of planning applications.

4.15 It is important to note, the strategy is not a planning constraint and does not constitute a planning designation. The strategy does not prevent development, including that of new homes, employment uses or other infrastructure. Instead, the strategy helps guide nature recovery and environmental activities that can be delivered as part of sustainable development.

4.16 The strategy also does not force the owners and managers of the land identified as high opportunity nature areas to make any changes, they have flexibility to identify what, if any, activities and funding options will work best for them.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 No alternative considerations appropriate.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Failure to publish the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) within the required timeframe poses a legal risk, as it would breach the statutory duty

placed on Responsible Authorities under the Environment Act 2021 and associated regulations including the biodiversity duty.

7. Financial implications

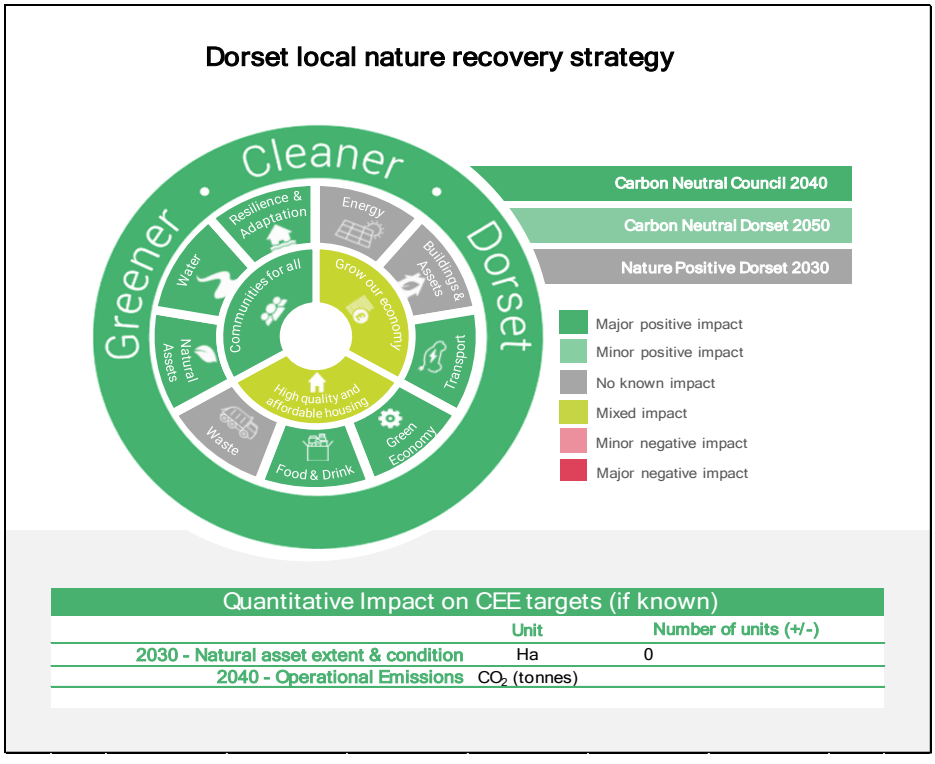
7.1 Dorset Council has received a budget from Defra to deliver the Dorset LNRS of £409,174 over three years. The LNRS Steering Group has overseen the expenditure.

7.2 Funding for the future delivery of the LNRS will happen through a variety of mechanisms including a central government grant, developer contributions, landowner initiatives, grants and project funding.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 One of the key actions in Dorset Council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023–2025 is to create a local nature recovery strategy, a commitment reinforced by the Council's declaration of a nature emergency in July 2024, placing nature's recovery at the heart of its plans.

8.2 Ensuring that the Dorset LNRS is implemented is critical to accomplishing the strategic natural environment ambitions of Dorset Council. The LNRS presents a collaborative, widely supported plan to deliver significant improvements to Dorset's natural environment over the coming years. Table of assessment and recommendations is in appendix 4.



9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications of this report. However, the impact of nature decline poses numerous health and wellbeing risks to the residents of Dorset. The strategy and its maps hope to ensure collective effort can achieve nature recovery and more people will have access to nature. Time spent in nature is known to improve mental and physical well-being and implementation of this strategy can therefore have benefits beyond the immediate remit of nature recovery.

10. Other implications

10.1 Failure to complete the adoption would see Defra pressure to comply with the requirements in a timely manner, potential repayment of grants to facilitate the strategy production and reputational damage to the council.

11. Risk implications

11.1 There are no significant risks from approving the recommendations to publish the LNRS for publication. This will mitigate the risk of failing to comply with Defra requirements.

11.2 Failing to ensure a published local nature recovery strategy for Dorset entails high risks associated with vulnerability to worsening nature decline and climate impacts, risks of missed opportunities (including economic, health and wellbeing opportunities); and reputational risks owing to known high level of public interest in the climate and nature change agenda.

11.3 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

11.4 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the current risk of non-compliance is high due to the potential failure to publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) by the statutory deadline. However, if the recommendations are to approve publication the residual risk is considered low, as this will ensure alignment with Defra requirements and demonstrate Dorset Council’s commitment to nature recovery and climate resilience.

12. Equalities

12.1 The Dorset LNRS is a strategic, high-level strategy that will not positively or negatively impact on anyone’s equality. EQIAs will be undertaken for specific work relating to the implementation of the strategy and for the public consultation exercise of the draft strategy.

12.2 Final documents and related materials shall meet accessibility requirements including plain text options. Through the public consultation the public have fed back the difficulty of understanding the mapping that accompanies the strategy. Maps will be available on a publicly accessible version of Dorset Explorer to view online and are being improved to ensure they are less technical.

12.3 An EQIA is available in Appendix 4.

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1: The Dorset local nature recovery strategy Dec 2025
- Appendix 2: The local habitat map (made up of)
    - Nature areas-national importance
    - High opportunity nature areas
    - Potential activities

  can be viewed at: https://gi.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsetexplorer/nature-recovery:
- Appendix 3: Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations for the Dorset local nature recovery strategy
- Appendix 4: Dorset local nature recovery strategy EQIA

14. Background papers

14.1 Supporting documents to the strategy production are available at Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy supporting documents - Dorset Council:

i. The Dorset LNRS consultation and engagement report
ii. Pressures on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery
iii. Policies, strategies and plans relating to the LNRS
iv. Species recovery methodology and longlist
v. Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps

14.2 The consultation analysis and response to that analysis is available at:

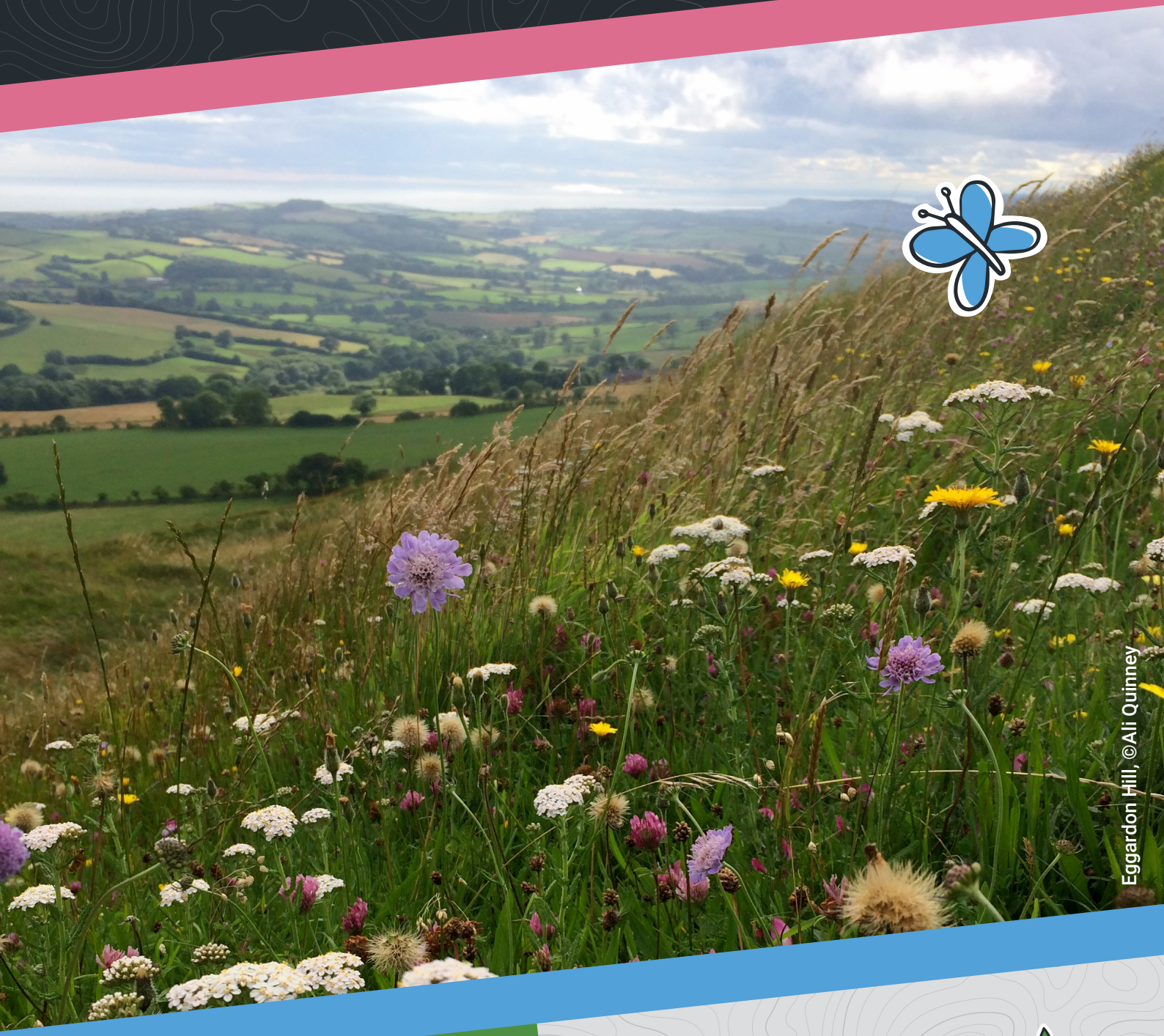
i. The Dorset LNRS consultation and engagement report - dorsetlnrsconsultationanalysisreportv2.pdf
ii. Dorset LNRS Consultation response report – responsetothedorsetlnrsconsultationreportv4.pdf

14.3 i Nature recovery in planning and development Nature recovery in planning and development: how Dorset's local nature recovery strategy works with planning - Dorset Council

15 Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025



Eggardon Hill, ©Ali Quinney

NATURE RECOVERY DORSET

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Foreword



The collaborative process to form this new strategy has been a superb effort across the two local authority teams, the wide range of experts involved and all the various landowners and organisations. Nature recovery is so important in both rural and urban areas and this strategy really creates a call to action for positive change, from hedgehog highways to landscape scale change.

Councillor Andy Hadley, Cabinet Member for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, BCP Council

We appreciate the diligent work which has gone into preparing this strategy and are very happy to have played our part. The local nature recovery Strategy team seriously engaged with farmers and landowners from early in the process and the strategy is very much the better for this.

Mark Burton, Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

The Dorset local nature strategy offers a comprehensive vision to safeguard and restore our natural environment. It underscores Dorset Council's dedication to addressing the current nature emergency and serves as a rallying call for residents, workers, and visitors to unite for nature recovery. At its core, the strategy prioritises increasing wildlife diversity and abundance, promoting sustainable land use, and ensuring accessible natural spaces for all. I am inspired by the collaboration of organisations, businesses, farmers, and individuals who have co-produced this strategy, working together to make Dorset nature-rich, healthier, and more resilient.

Councillor Nick Ireland, Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding, Dorset Council

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Being part of the steering group for the Dorset local nature recovery strategy has been an inspiring experience, bringing together a wealth of local knowledge and expertise to create a shared vision for nature recovery. This collaboration highlights the collective commitment across Dorset to protect, enhance and embrace our natural environment.

Shelley Collins-Trevett, Business Growth and Invest in Dorset, Dorset Council

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy is a key piece of our work in the county to enhance and improve the state of nature in Dorset. Despite our home county being a fabulously rich place in terms of landscape, we know that nature is still declining and we need to act and with urgency to improve ecological resilience and biodiversity. The Local Nature Partnership has been proud to work with other stakeholders to enable this vital strategy.

Luke Rake, former chair Dorset Local Nature Partnership

Half of Dorset is nationally recognised for its natural beauty, in which the quality of nature is an integral part. The local nature recovery strategy helps set out how we can ensure natural beauty is enhanced into the future, and it's great to have played our part in its development.

Ian Rees, Dorset National Landscape

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy has given us the opportunity to examine together how nature is faring across our area and what is collectively needed to reverse declines, so that wildlife thrives and we can all connect with and benefit from a healthy environment. Some of the answers have been sobering and there is much to do to meet the ambitious goals, but the commitment shown from people and organisations with a wide range of interests to make this happen gives huge optimism.

Imogen Davenport, Dorset Wildlife Trust

> We have been pleased to link in the voluntary and community sector with this vital work for Dorset. Finding ways to work together and amplify our communities' voices and involvement with nature recovery through this strategy development process has been inspiring and empowering.
>
> Jon Sloper, Help And Kindness

> The conservation movement has spent decades developing techniques to help conserve our last remaining wildlife. Despite this every time we check on the state of nature it has further declined. We need to change how we work, to evolve from nature conservation to delivering nature recovery. This document, and the consultation that went into producing it, begins to chart a strategy for that recovery. While this is, at its core, a strategy for nature recovery it has been crafted mindful of the need for our countryside to fulfil multiple functions, including hosting profitable businesses and providing rural employment. I commend the report to all who have an interest in the future of Dorset's countryside, we now need to make it happen.
>
> Ian Alexander, Natural England

> This document, and the breadth of the partnership that contributed time, energy and hard work to create it, marks the commitment of so many people across Dorset to nature recovery. The health of our natural environment is vital for the health and wellbeing of residents and this strategy is an opportunity to drive improvements for nature, improve quality of life and reduce health inequalities.
>
> Rachel Partridge, Public Health and Prevention, Dorset Council

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Thank you

Dorset Council, BCP Council and Natural England would like to thank all the people who have helped in some way contribute to preparing this strategy and its maps, which will ensure collective action to achieve the best outcomes for nature and people in Dorset.



Steering group visit to Kingston Maurward College



Executive summary

Dorset's natural environment supports a wide variety of wildlife and local communities. People across the county depend on nature for health, food, water, economy and enjoyment. And healthy ecosystems, with thriving wildlife, provide essential nature-based solutions to climate change, flood protection and pollution. Our environment and its benefits hold real value to us and the wildlife we share this county with.

However, over the years, we have weakened this environmental asset. The amount and variety of wildlife in our county have reduced, and many areas for nature have been split up or lost. Dorset's local nature recovery strategy marks an end to this loss and decline. It is the point at which we begin the process of nature recovery by restoring, expanding and creating space for nature across the county.

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy is a celebration, uniting individuals, communities and organisations in a joint mission to address the climate and nature emergencies. At the heart of the strategy is a shared vision for nature in Dorset to be thriving, resilient and enjoyed by all.

The strategy calls for everyone to play a role in creating more sustainable practices that benefit both nature and people, whether it involves sustainable farming, forestry, urban planning, or wildlife-friendly gardening. With around 70% of the land being managed by farming, foresters, and landowners, they will play a pivotal role in this effort, delivering agricultural productivity alongside sustainable land management and habitat restoration to support biodiversity.

The co-produced strategy provides a comprehensive framework for restoring nature across the county. It contains 13 nature recovery priorities, supported by detailed activities. Its spatial element - the local habitat map - will help target efforts to achieve the greatest gains for biodiversity and the wider environment. Fifty-five priority species have been identified as needing bespoke activities to ensure they remain or return to Dorset. Together these tools ensure a strategic, collective and effective approach to nature recovery across the county.



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Tree planting

©Dorset National Landscape

Funding continues to pose a significant challenge to achieving the ambitious 30by30 target in Dorset, which aims to protect and manage 30% of land for nature by 2030. However, opportunities exist through biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation projects, environmental land management schemes, and local collaborations. Community-driven projects and innovative funding mechanisms will be crucial to bridging gaps and ensuring progress.

Progress will be monitored through a review process led by Dorset Council, which will assess achievements every 3 to 10 years. This process will evaluate completed activities and their impacts, supported by existing monitoring initiatives that track habitats, species, and enabling measures. These insights will help refine and strengthen ongoing efforts, ensuring the strategy remains adaptive and effective.

By everyone working together, we will create more space for nature and Dorset's nature areas will be better, bigger and joined up, creating a legacy for future generations.

Shared vision

Nature in Dorset is recovering, thriving, resilient and connected across our landscapes. Everyone in Dorset is able to access nature and be involved in nature recovery



Joint mission



Work together to meet the urgent need to address the climate and nature emergencies through nature recovery, bringing benefits for our wellbeing and communities



Introduction

Nature recovery

Dorset is home to a wide variety of habitats, such as heathland, grassland, woodland, wetland and coastal areas, which support a whole range of species. But over the years the amount and variety of wildlife in our county has reduced and many areas for nature have been split up or lost, leading to a nature emergency that needs urgent action. Find out more about this in Nature in Dorset.

Nature recovery is the process of actively restoring and enhancing the natural environment by creating more wildlife-rich spaces across the countryside, coast and towns.

Nature recovery is needed to:

- increase the diversity and abundance of plants, animals and other wildlife, to address declines in biodiversity
- create and restore a network of habitats, connected by more wildlife-rich spaces across our towns, villages, roads and farmland
- restore naturally functioning ecosystems that are more resilient to pressures
- improve water quality for people and wildlife, by reducing the sources of pollution and supporting nature to filter out pollution
- help us combat climate change, storing and absorbing carbon in habitats like woodland, peatland and saltmarsh
- make people and wildlife more resilient to the impacts of climate change
- protect people's homes and buildings from flooding, by using nature-based solutions like trees and floodplains to slow the flow of water across the landscape
- support farmers and growers to provide healthy and sustainable food with healthier soils and cleaner water
- boost our physical and mental health, with more wildlife-rich spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. Plus more natural features in towns will help improve air quality and cooling during heatwaves, and reduce inequalities in access to nature which play a part in unfair differences in health outcomes
- support our rural economy to be sustainable for future generations, protecting and growing jobs across sectors such as farming, land management, tourism, and food and drink.

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Local nature recovery strategies

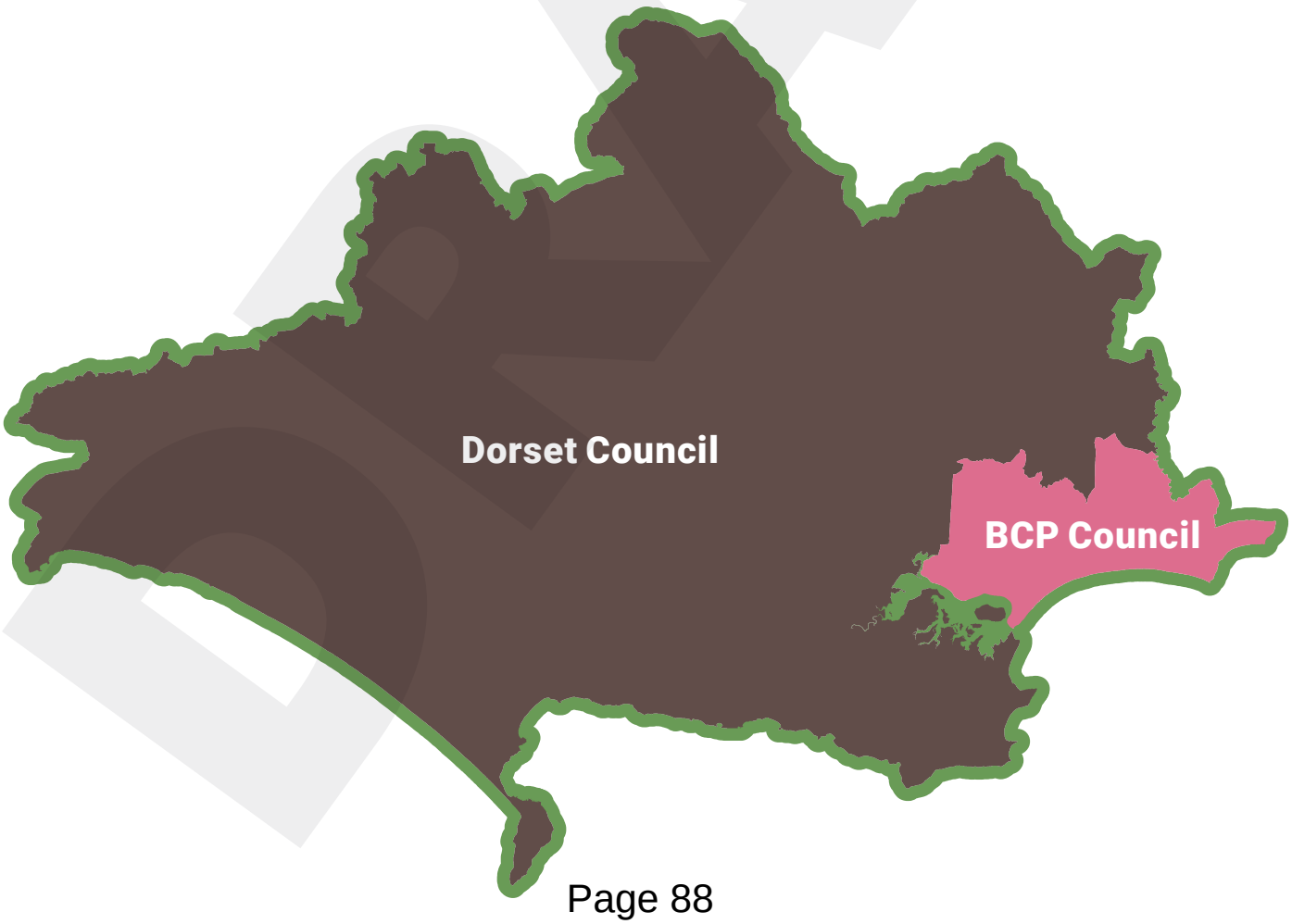
In 2023, the UK Government tasked each county or combined authority area in England with developing a local nature recovery strategy, as a requirement of the Environment Act (2021).

These spatial strategies will provide the framework to drive forward a nature recovery network across England, by agreeing local priorities and mapping locations where activities will most effectively contribute to these goals. National government will join Dorset's strategy with 47 others to cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps.

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy covers the county of Dorset, including both Dorset Council and BCP Council areas. The strategy covers all the land and freshwater, up to the inter tidal zone as far as mean low water, the strategy does not cover the marine environment.

Dorset Council was appointed as responsible authority to coordinate and facilitate the preparation of Dorset's local nature recovery strategy, working closely with BCP Council and Natural England as supporting authorities, and a wide range of local people and organisations.

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy area





The 30by30 target

The overarching ambition of Dorset's first local nature recovery strategy is to help achieve the national and international 30by30 target to protect and manage 30% of land and rivers for nature by 2030. This is just five years away, showing how urgently we need to help nature recover.

Simply put, an area can count towards 30by30 if all of the following 3 criteria are met:

1. The purpose or management objectives include positive outcomes for nature
2. There are long term commitments to biodiversity and protections against loss or damage to biodiversity
3. Management and monitoring are in place to deliver the intended benefits for nature

Nature recovery doesn't just focus on 30% of land though, it's about increasing nature-friendly management of the intervening land as much as possible.

Making space for nature

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy uses the 4 key principles of creating "more, bigger, better and joined" spaces for nature, as outlined in the Making Space for Nature report led by Professor Sir John Lawton in 2010, now often referred to as the Lawton principles.

This strategy uses the Lawton principles as a basis for nature recovery across Dorset, and outlines how we will commit to making better, bigger, more and joined up space for nature.

The principles are explained in the boxes below, they are listed in order of importance. This order was set out by Lawton in the original report and built upon in Natural England's Nature Networks - a summary for practitioners.

Better	Improve management of existing 'core' nature sites to improve diversity and restore natural processes
Bigger	Create much larger nature areas across the landscape, making the current 'core' nature areas big enough to be naturally functioning and resilient
More	Create new natural habitats in areas where there currently aren't any, choosing places that connect to existing 'core' nature areas
Joined up	Join nature areas by creating corridors and stepping stones to allow wildlife to travel further. Also, increase nature friendly management of the intervening land

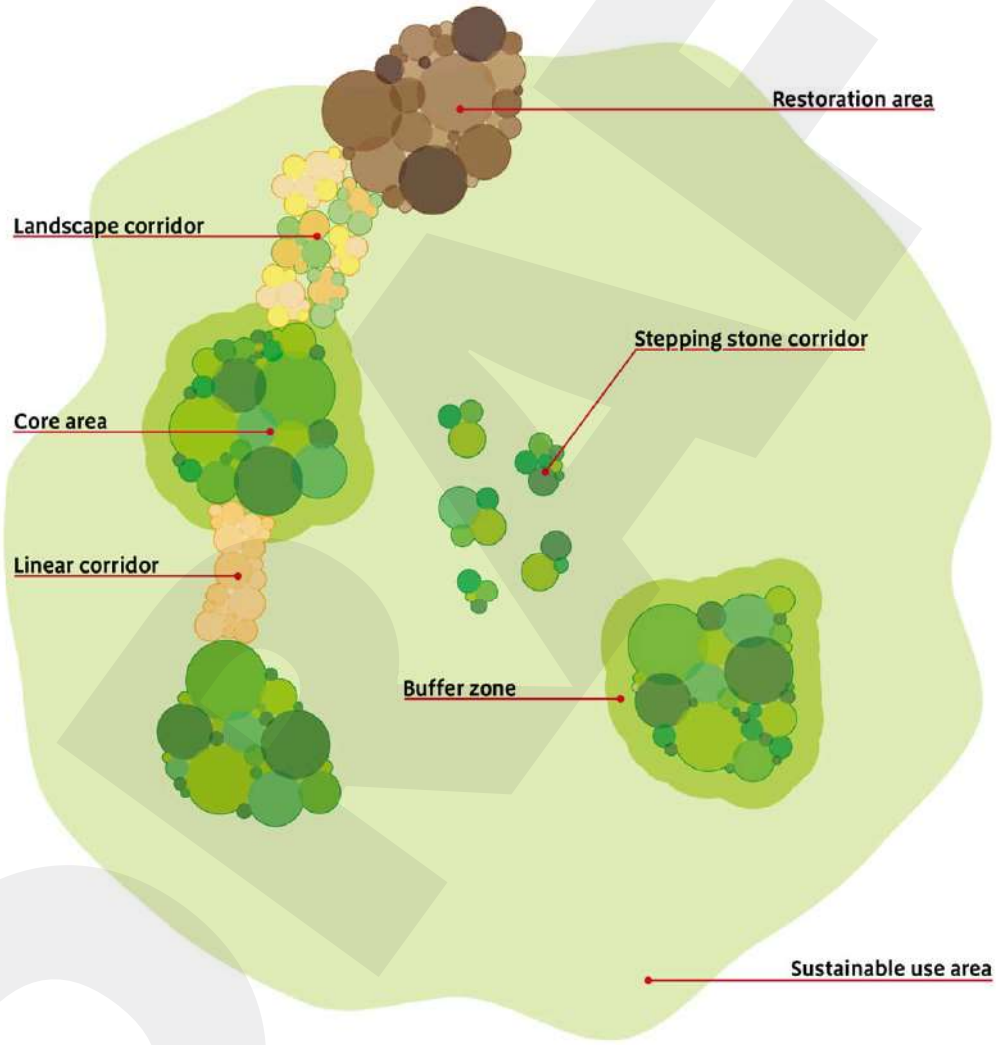
Making better, bigger, more and joined space for nature helps strengthen and grow a nature recovery network.

Growing a nature recovery network

Core areas
Natural habitats that are already important for nature and can be managed to better support wildlife and natural proceses

Buffer zones
Making 'core' areas big enough to be naturally functioning and protected from external pressures or environmental shocks e.g. flooding, fire or drought

Restoration area
Creating or restoring natural habitat in places that connect to 'core' nature areas



Stepping stones
Smaller nature areas that provide resting and feeding places for wildlife as they travel between 'core' nature areas

Sustainable use area
Land in between nature areas is managed or developed in a more nature-friendly way

Corridors
Uninterrupted strips of habitat that provides a safe passage for wildlife e.g. rivers and hedgerows

Image: Lawton et al (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network.

Purpose

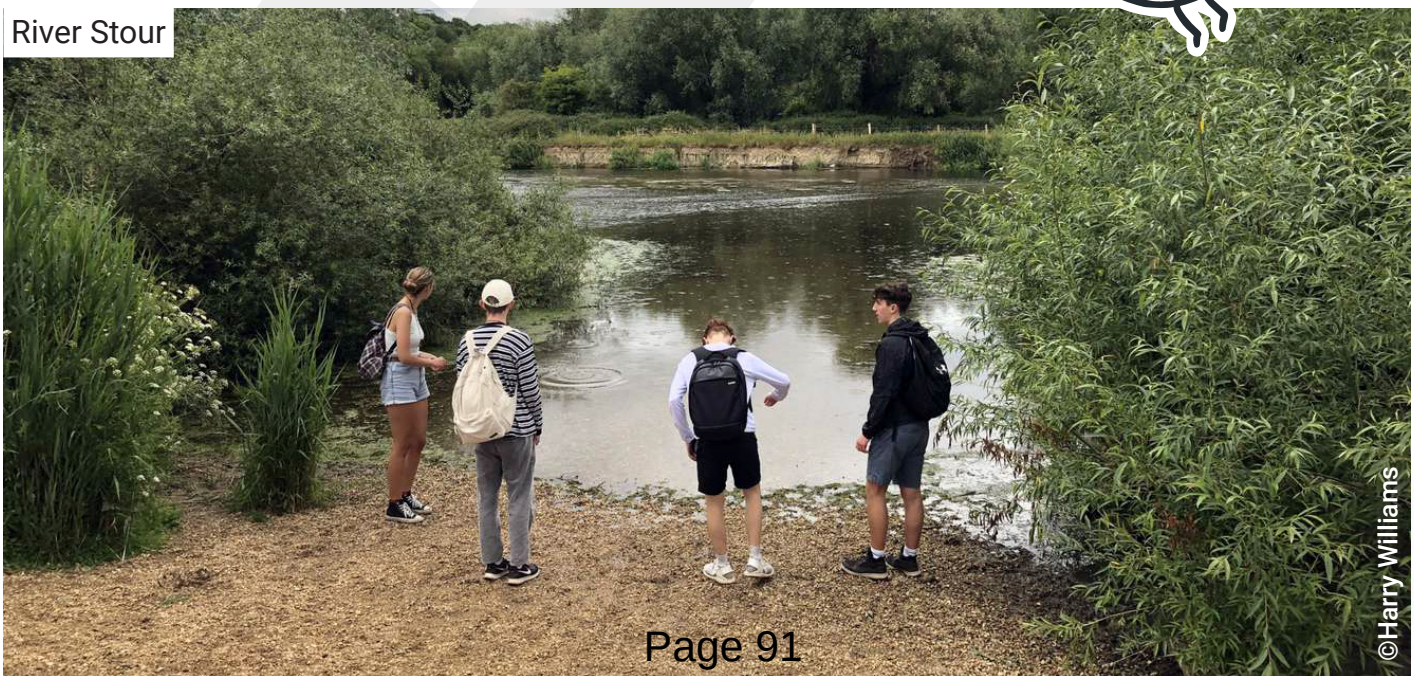
This local nature recovery strategy provides a 10-year framework to enable everyone to work together and achieve the shared vision for nature recovery across Dorset. It is a strategic tool that will enable further collective action and help target future efforts.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- provide a clear understanding of Dorset's current biodiversity, the need for urgent action and opportunities for nature recovery
- build on the long-standing efforts of local communities, farmers, land managers, foresters and wildlife organisations to support nature recovery across the county
- create a unified approach to nature recovery over the next 10 years, to agree what Dorset is trying to achieve and how everyone can contribute in different ways
- provide clear priorities, proposed activities and mapped high opportunity nature areas for a wide range of people to use as a guide to support nature recovery across Dorset
- inform local land management, planning and development decisions to ensure nature recovery is considered
- support people and organisations putting together land management plans, funding bids, landscape recovery projects and other related plans (e.g. transport, local plans)
- promote further partnership working to deliver nature recovery on large landscape scale and create a nature recovery network
- target future efforts and resources by mapping locations where activities can achieve the best outcomes for nature and the wider environment
- enable Dorset to monitor future progress by establishing more coordinated mechanisms for monitoring and recording activities.



River Stour



©Harry Williams

The strategy does not:

- replace land management plans, project plans or green infrastructure plans - these will still be prepared by those delivering nature recovery
- remove the need for local knowledge, expert advice, or field assessments when planning what mix of activities to carry out in an area. Maps are to be used as a guide only. It's important to check the suitability of local soils, slope of the land and water levels. You may need advice from an ecologist or farm/ forestry advisor
- replace the need to refer to best practice guidance, legislation, regulatory processes and local policies when planning to carry out nature recovery activities
- dictate which funding route to use to deliver nature recovery activities
- force the owners and managers of the land identified as high opportunity nature areas to make any changes, they have flexibility to identify what, if any, activities and funding options will work best for them
- prevent the development of new homes and infrastructure, instead the strategy helps guide biodiversity and environmental activities to deliver as part of sustainable development
- aim to replace recreation grounds and parks with nature reserves, the strategy focuses on adjusting the balance to allow people and wildlife to thrive
- propose new nature protections, designations or restrictions in high opportunity nature areas
- stop nature conservation work happening in places outside the high opportunity nature areas
- provide a complete land-use or food strategy for the county, the focus of this strategy is on sustainable farming practices that minimise disruption to ecology and natural processes, to deliver nature recovery alongside food production
  - » wider food system issues have been considered in The National Food Strategy based on evidence and expertise from across food, farming & nature sectors
  - » locally, The Feeding Dorset Partnership brings together pioneering food champions and projects to improve the resilience of supply and access to healthy and sustainable food
  - » wider issues around sustainable development and infrastructure are considered in other national and local strategies, such as local plans and transport plans. These have their own consultation and engagement processes
- focus on improving people's access to nature, however, this strategy does include activities to increase nature connectedness and map locations to create more nature-rich areas near people's homes. Wider work on access to nature is ongoing, such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, projects supporting people to overcome barriers to accessing nature, and ongoing programmes along the South West Coast Path and King Charles III England Coast Path.



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Who is the strategy for?

The strategy is a tool to help everyone in Dorset work together, celebrate success and enable further collective action. The table below highlights what the strategy offers to different sectors across the county.

Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land managers	Communities & Individuals	Business, Industry & Economy
People who own and/or manage land (for example, farms, woodlands and estates)	Members of the public and local voluntary or community sector organisations	Large and small businesses across all sectors (for example, utilities, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, building development)
• includes potential activities suggested by local farmers, foresters and land managers already delivering nature recovery • proposes potential activities that can be funded through Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) and other funding routes • identifies high opportunity nature areas where funding can be targeted to deliver nature recovery • showcases where farmers or foresters are working together in clusters or landscape projects, and more opportunities to connect up • showcases economic benefits of nature recovery and where private finance could be targeted	• showcases what communities are already doing for nature and how others can get involved • suggests potential activities that can be done in all types of outdoor spaces, across the countryside, and in towns or villages • supports funding applications for nature recovery projects • identifies high opportunity nature areas, creating more nature-rich spaces for people to enjoy • shows how community activities can join up with others across the landscape • helps deliver priorities in neighbourhood plans	• shares best practice from businesses and industries delivering nature recovery • proposes potential activities that can be delivered by businesses of different types and sizes • identifies high opportunity nature areas for delivering nature recovery in the countryside, on industrial sites, and in urban towns • showcases economic benefits of nature recovery and where private finance could be targeted • guides how development sites can help create, enhance and join habitats, and deliver wider environmental benefits



Public bodies

Local government, town and parish councils, regional government bodies and agencies, and public service providers

- shares best practice of how public bodies are helping nature recovery
- helps the production of local plans and the delivery of sustainable development
- provides a county-wide approach to biodiversity net gain, identifying potential locations for off-site biodiversity net gain through the high opportunity nature areas
- supports efforts to improve health and wellbeing by increasing use of nature-based activities and increasing people's contact with nature as part of everyday life
- identifies where habitat creation or enhancement can also help deliver wider public sector responsibilities, such as flood protection and carbon storage
- informs statutory, funding and operational decision making as part of the biodiversity duty

Nature & Environment sector

Individuals and organisations with expertise or interest in nature, environmental issues and managing land for conservation purposes

- showcases success stories and best practice from local nature projects
- brings together a variety of work into a shared list of priorities that everyone can work towards
- supports funding applications from a range of public, private and voluntary sector funding
- identifies high opportunity nature areas where action can achieve the most benefits for nature and wider environment
- connects people across sectors, and shows locations where there might be more opportunities to join up

Partnerships & Connectors

Existing groups that work collaboratively across sectors or on specific issues

- helps strengthen and grow existing partnerships
- forms new connections across sectors
- links the people of Dorset together under one framework to commit to delivering nature recovery across Dorset
- supports funding applications from a range of public, private and voluntary sector funding
- identifies high opportunity nature areas where efforts can be focused to achieve the most benefits



Working in partnership

Co-produced strategy

This local nature recovery strategy has been prepared with input, support, advice and guidance from a diverse range of people and organisations. It builds on a strong history of partnership working in Dorset, and many successful efforts to care for our natural environment.

Between July 2023 to December 2024, a steering group and 5 advisory groups worked together to shape and input into the strategy, with representatives from 42 different organisations. **The steering group ensured strategy preparation was inclusive, transparent, and timely, with representatives from organisations spanning many different sectors:**

- BCP Council
- Country Land and Business Association (CLA)
- Dorset Council
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
- Dorset National Landscape
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Dorset Youth
- Help and Kindness
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- Natural England
- Public Health Dorset

The 5 advisory groups were set specific tasks to help prepare the strategy, meeting regularly and attending an all-groups workshop. Some of the tasks involved members gathering more inputs from wider stakeholders within their networks. **The 5 advisory groups included:**

- mapping and data advisory group
- species task and finish group
- farmer cluster advisory group
- nature, farming, forestry and land use advisory group
- communications and engagement advisory group

In addition, other people took part in a range of **events, workshops or online webinars** refining the strategy and maps over time.

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation and Engagement Report provides more detail on the groups, engagement activities and data insights.

The infographic on the next page represents the tremendous input and commitment from the people of Dorset, showing an ambition for Dorset to become a place where nature thrives.



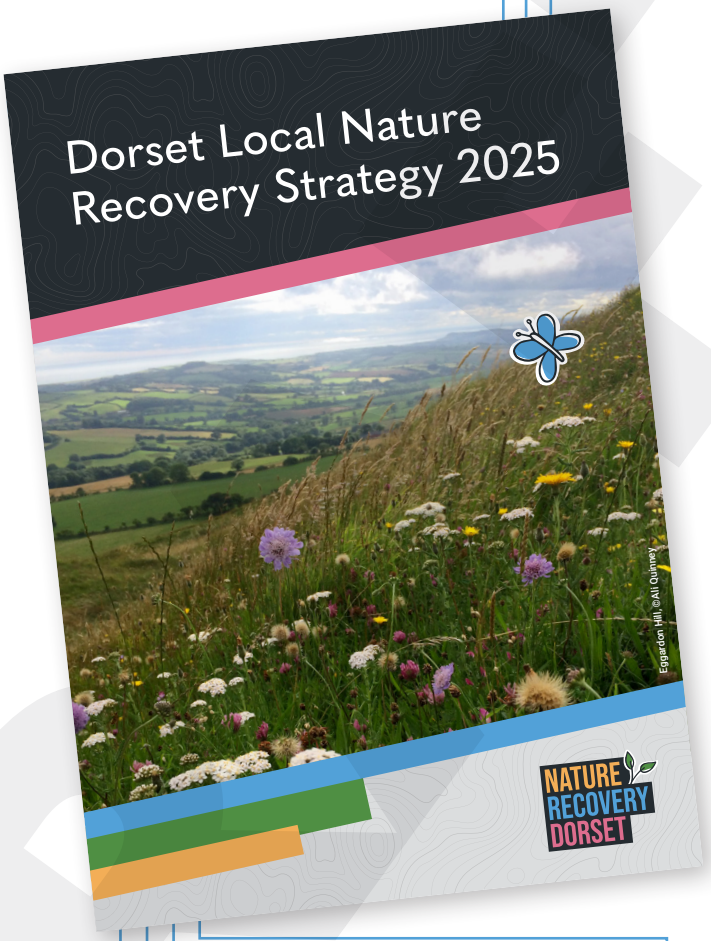
Workshop with advisory group members

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1,348 hours given by 76 advisory group members from 42 organisations

1,375 people involved in workshops and events to help prepare the strategy

288 Nature Recovery Dorset network members



110 land manager proposals for the high opportunity nature areas

63 social media posts, reaching **164,530** people

13,260 views on the on the Nature Recovery Dorset webpages and **115,300** people read our e-newsletter articles

375 responses to the public consultation and 205 people spoken with during the consultation period

Infographic correct as of 30 September 2025.

Back to contents

A shared vision for nature in Dorset



NATURE RECOVERY DORSET

Nature in Dorset is recovering, thriving, resilient and connected across our landscapes.
Everyone in Dorset is able to access nature and be involved in nature recovery.

Nature in Dorset

Dorset is known for its natural beauty, with a network of habitats that provide homes to a wide range of wildlife. Fifty-two per cent of Dorset is designated as National Landscape, the highest proportion of any English county, while its coastline forms part of the only natural World Heritage Site in England. For a small county, Dorset punches far above its weight for biodiversity and geodiversity but has still been affected by the declines in nature observed across the world.

Dorset's geodiversity

Dorset's geological diversity is a key factor in the county's wildlife and landscape richness. From extensive acidic and infertile sands, gravels and clays in the south-east supporting heathland, to a central broad sweep of high, rolling chalk country and downland, with clay to the north and west forming broad and narrow vales, and a sequence of Jurassic, Cretaceous and Paleogene rocks along its coastline creates a complex and spectacular series of cliffs, headlands, bays and beaches.

Geodiversity is the term given to the variety of non-living elements of nature, such as rocks, minerals, fossils, soils, landforms, along with active processes like rivers, flooding and landslides. Together with climate and weather, geodiversity underpins everything in Dorset's natural environment and provides the fundamental conditions for nature recovery.

Rock type, soils and landforms determine the mix of habitats and natural processes that occur in an area, and certain geodiversity features can support particular species. For example, post-glacial gravel riverbeds support Atlantic salmon spawning, limestone cliffs support rare moths, bare ground and stones in heathland support sand lizards and ants, and active processes like landslides create perfect conditions for pioneering plants. Geodiversity features range tremendously in scale, from small natural rock outcrops to ridges and escarpments that run the length of the county. They can also be manmade, including stone built walls in towns and field boundaries, the remnants of disused quarries and the dark depths of abandoned mine adits.

The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site is the jewel in the county crown, inscribed for its globally unique geodiversity. Further inland, many geological features are protected as part of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These are further supported by Dorset's network of 50 Local Geological Sites (also known as Regionally Important Geological Sites).

Slepe Heath



©Mark Singleton

Dorset's exceptional geodiversity helps us understand the function of Earth systems over very long periods of time, including the causes and consequences of environmental change, critical biodiversity loss, and mass extinctions. Fossil data from more recent times is being used to confirm environmental baselines, which help guide water management and rewilding projects, and predict climate change impacts on wildlife and habitats. Dorset is a key reference point for this type of research at a global scale, helping improve understanding of the current climate and nature emergencies. Locally, understanding geodiversity can help improve the identification of nature recovery opportunities and forecast the likely resilience of landscapes and habitats to environmental change.



Dorset's biodiversity

Fine examples of chalk downland survive on steeper slopes where grazing maintains species-rich grassland featuring fine grasses, aromatic herbs, and a select band of orchids. Dark green fritillary and Adonis blue butterflies still flourish in places, alongside stripe winged grasshoppers, and countless other insects.

The coastal limestones exhibit some differences from the chalk. Often the grassland here is dominated by coarse tor-grass, but where well-grazed, these coastal slopes in Purbeck support England's largest population of early spider orchids. Lulworth skipper butterflies are restricted to this coast, while Portland's unique landscape is a stronghold for many scarce species, including mosses and lichens.

Kingcombe and Powerstock Common are among the best surviving examples of the scattered pastures and hay meadows of the clay vales, these species-rich grasslands display gems such as waxcap fungi, adder's tongue and green winged orchid and are home to surviving populations of marsh fritillary butterfly.

Heathlands surrounding Poole Harbour and stretching from the river Avon almost to Dorchester, represent an evocative, cultural landscape that for millennia supported a rural economy. The Dorset heaths are internationally important and are some of the biggest and finest remaining areas of lowland heathland in the UK, representing around 14% of England's heathland. The heathers, gorses and bog-moss filled mires still impart a sense of the wild. For those keen to search and listen, there is an unrivalled suite of special wildlife. Treasures like Dorset heather, marsh gentian, golden bog-moss, nightjar, woodlark, sand lizard, and silver-studded blue butterflies - some which are unique to Dorset or have their largest populations here.



Dorset's scatter of truly ancient woodlands varies with soils and topography. On steep chalk slopes ash and field maple trees are typical, while on heavier or more acidic soils, oak and hazel dominate, in all cases accompanied by other smaller trees and shrubs. Spring flora of these old woodlands include bluebell, wood anemone, ramsons, woodruff and early purple orchid. Veteran trees in wood pasture and old parkland can support rare lichens that are internationally important.

Across and through this range of broad habitats, run Dorset's rivers. The flashy clay river Stour and its many tributaries, and smaller similar rivers like the Brit and Corfe, and the ephemeral winterbournes. Dorset is also home to globally important chalk streams. England boasts the highest number of chalk rivers in Europe, and Dorset alone accounts for around 14% of these streams by length. As well as the watercourses, with their fish, invertebrates, kingfishers, water voles and otters, floodplains still support riparian woodland of willow and alder, or reedbeds and wetland habitats like marshes. In rare cases, floodplains are also home to species-rich grassland, wildflower meadows of marsh marigold, marsh orchids, and ragged robin. The heathlands in the south east of the county form part of the Dorset and New Forest Important Freshwater Landscape, which is 1 of 24 nationally important areas for freshwater biodiversity, with many high-quality river reaches and an exceptional concentration of endangered aquatic species.

Most of these rivers eventually feed into Dorset's 2 natural harbours, Christchurch and Poole, the latter being the second largest in the world. There are coastal habitats of saltmarshes, reedbeds, shingle spits, cliffs, chines, and at Studland, the largest area of acidic sand dune heath in England. Winter bird numbers of international importance, nesting terns and gulls, and now osprey and white-tailed eagle are highlights of these wonderful places, often to be witnessed from vantage points in nearby towns. Nestled within a busy urban area, the combined area of Christchurch Harbour, Hengistbury Head, Stanpit Marsh and the Lower Stour is a nature-rich haven. This area is home to over 25% of the UK's native plant species, 40% of its moths and butterflies, and 50% of its bird species. Another outstanding feature is the Fleet - the largest area of brackish lagoon in the country - sheltered behind Chesil, one of England's 3 great shingle structures. Both sites hold special wildlife, as do nearby Radipole Lake and Lodmoor wetland nature reserves.

The Dorset nature recovery maps show habitat and ecological network layers that cover most of the semi-natural habitats we have in Dorset: grassland, woodland, heathland, wetland and coastal. Semi-natural habitats are those that have been changed in some ways by human activity, but still retain much of their biodiversity and natural processes. Other nature areas may still provide habitat or be managed using nature-friendly practices, but have been more seriously changed by human activity, and so lack the same level of biodiversity and naturally well-functioning ecosystems. For example:

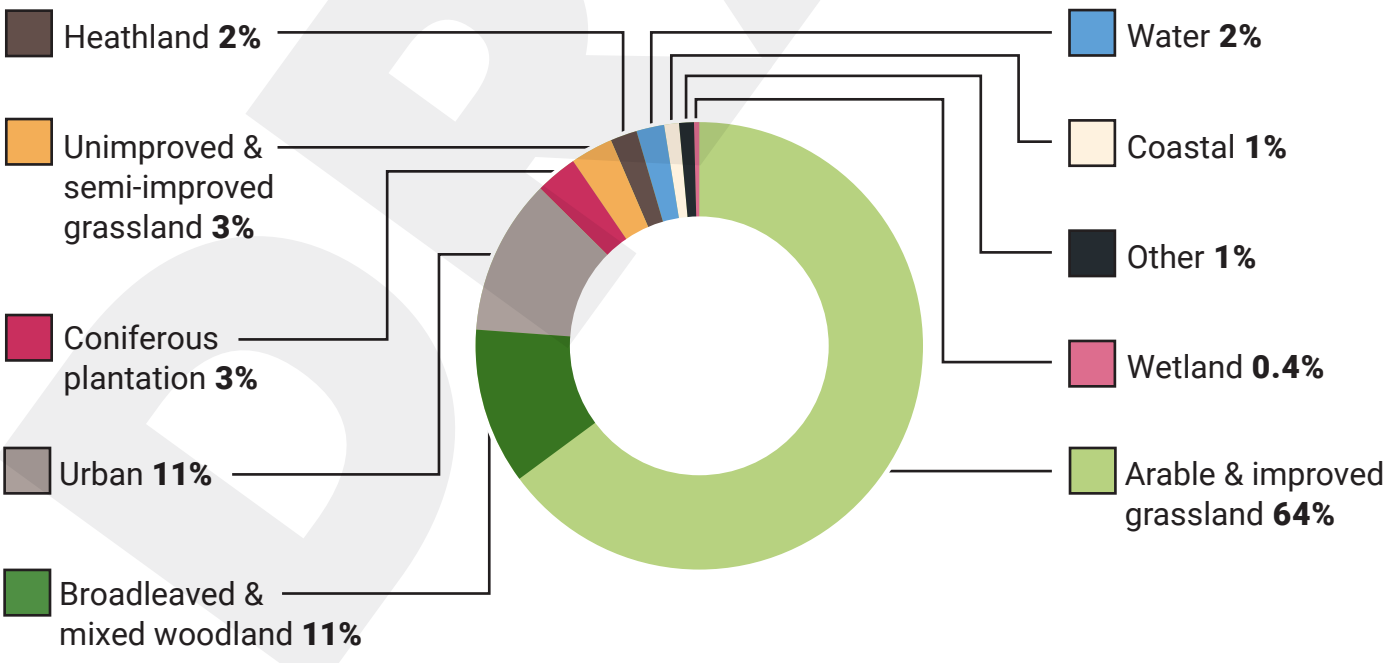
- arable and improved grassland - land used for growing crops, grazing livestock, or sometimes recreation in parks and sports fields
- coniferous plantation – land used to grow a crop of trees, often with non-native species and often on land that used to be broadleaved woodland or heathland
- gardens in homes and public spaces growing plants and trees

The figure below shows roughly how these different habitat types and land uses cover Dorset. The percentages are based on a land cover map produced for Dorset using local data, expertise, and some satellite imagery in 2018. The map identified 163 habitat classes (using the Integrated Habitat System) which were simplified into 30 legend classes, from which the ecological networks were created.

Although water only covers about 2% of the county, there are 4611.6km of rivers and streams across Dorset. Of these, almost a third are globally rare chalk streams (1460km).

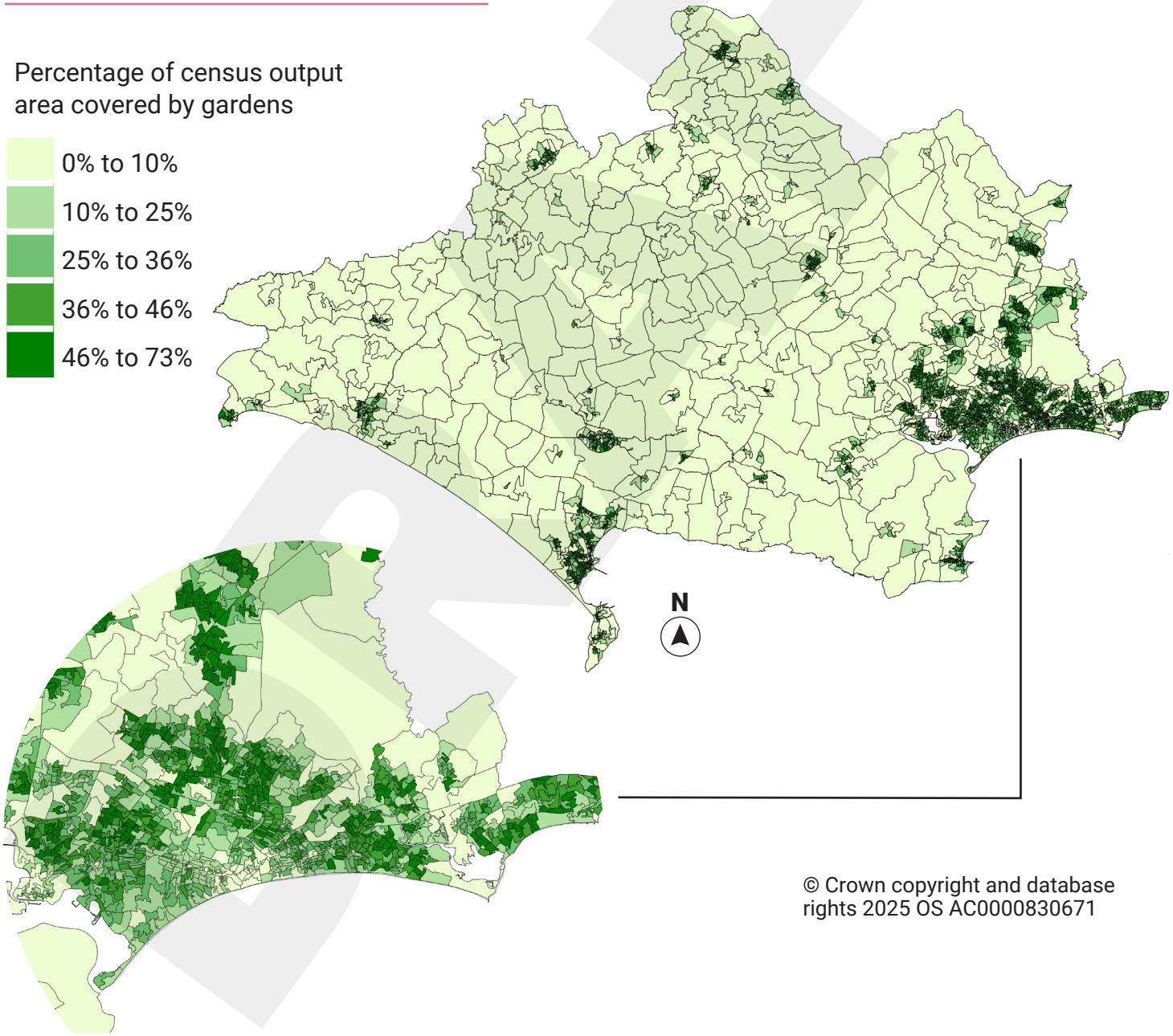
Find out more about this data on page 106.

Approximate percentage of land cover in Dorset



Urban areas cover 11% of the county, including buildings, roads, and some of the green infrastructure in-between, as well as gardens in people's homes. Overall residential gardens cover around 4% of Dorset, but in some towns around 70% of the area is covered by gardens. Using data from the census, the map below indicates how much of each area of Dorset is covered by gardens. This highlights the importance of using wildlife-friendly gardening practices everywhere, especially in areas where gardens provide most of the space for nature and important connectivity with the wider countryside. Find out more on how our gardens and public parks can make a big difference to nature recovery in priority 7.

Census Area and Garden Coverage



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Find the source of this information on page 196.

Safeguarding and promoting Dorset's biodiversity

Dorset is widely recognised as a reservoir of biodiversity, providing a home for rare and declining wildlife. This status brings with it a responsibility to safeguard and promote populations of wildlife such as bat species and rare reptiles, which are not commonly found elsewhere. Where species exist in low numbers or in sub-optimal habitats, such as the hazel dormouse, taking steps to protect them and enhance their habitats ensures biodiversity 'hotspots' continue. This allows space for species populations to thrive and eventually disperse and establish more widely. One way this can be achieved is through the establishment of protected areas like nature reserves. But it also requires expansion, connection and creation of suitable habitat to recover nature at a much bigger landscape scale.



Dormouse nest tube

Declines in Dorset's nature

Declines in nature are worrying and have alarming impacts on wildlife and people. By understanding the pressures causing these declines, we can identify opportunities to reverse them and restore balance, allowing nature to thrive.

Until recently, Dorset's habitat diversity and wildlife abundance had remained relatively stable for thousands of years. However, in recent decades, the amount, variety and condition of habitats and species in Dorset has reduced. Many areas for nature have been degraded, split up or lost. The State of Nature report shows similar trends are happening across the UK.

In many places, habitats have become smaller and disconnected (known as fragmentation). This prevents species from moving freely from place to place, making them more vulnerable to pressures and increasing the risk of extinction. An example of this can be found on Turbary Common, where urban development has fragmented the heathland. This has led to resident adders being isolated from other populations, resulting in inbreeding which has caused deformities in their scales.

Nature decline means that our ecosystems are not thriving and are less able to cope with change. This often results in a decline and degradation of essential ecosystem services, such as clean water and good air quality, which benefit people. Without urgent action to recover nature, people and wildlife will both suffer. The figures listed below highlight the scale of the declines in nature that must be recovered.

Grassland (1930 to 2015)

- **97%** decline in neutral grassland and **70%** decline in calcareous grassland
- **64%** neutral grassland converted to improved grassland
- **43%** calcareous grassland converted to arable, **47%** converted to improved grassland
- **50%** of acid grassland converted to improved grassland
- Some grassland has also been lost to woodland creation and development of buildings

Heathland (1930 to 2015)

- **57%** decline in heathland sites
- **22%** of heathland converted to conifer plantations
- Fragmentation of heathland into over 100 small sites, impacting the ability of species to disperse and move between areas
- **29%** decrease in the average area of heathland sites
- Note work to restore heathland habitat between 2000-2022 has already reduced fragmentation by **43%**

Wetland (1930 to 2015)

- **63%** decline in wetlands with considerable loss in fen, marsh and swamp

Woodland (1930 to 2015)

- **17%** of broadleaved woodland converted to conifer plantations

Connectivity and fragmentation (1930 to 2000)

- **74%** decline in total area of semi-natural habitat
- **72-94%** decline in average fragment size for semi-natural grassland and heathland, **31%** decline in average size of woodland fragments
- Up to **98%** reduction in connectivity between semi-natural grassland and heathland fragments

Rivers and other surface water bodies (in 2019)

- **18%** of water bodies have good ecological status
- **48%** of water bodies have moderate ecological status
- **25%** of water bodies have poor ecological status
- **9%** of water bodies have bad ecological status

Find the source of this information on page 100 to read more about the impacts of these declines on biodiversity, ecosystem services and the economy.

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Some key drivers of these declines in nature have been changes in the way people live over recent decades. This section explains the impacts of these changes, with a broader range of pressures on nature listed in the next section.

Farming and forestry have long been an important part of Dorset's culture and economy, with farmland being the main wildlife habitat in England for thousands of years. The amount of land used for farming in Dorset has remained similar over the years, but there has been significant change in the types of farming practices. Following the 2 world wars of 20th century there was a national drive for self-sufficiency in food and timber production, an unprecedented increase in availability of cheap artificial fertilisers and pesticides, and new machinery and cheap fuel to shift away from hand labour and horsepower. Changes in farming and forestry practices made it easier for many of us to access food and timber, but we now realise many of these practices have contributed to declines in biodiversity and been too disruptive to the natural functioning of ecosystems.

Nature, farming and forestry must continue to go hand in hand. Sustainable farming and forestry practices are needed to reverse declines in biodiversity and ensure ecosystems are functioning to support both food and timber production.

Development is part of modern life, as we build homes, public buildings, offices, factories, and roads, or extract natural resources from quarries and woodlands. As development has increased over recent decades, we have changed many natural areas into man-made surfaces which has disrupted natural processes and introduced more pressures like pollution and disease. But development can be done sustainably, to ensure the natural environment is left in a better state after development than it was before. We can also take steps to increase the amount of natural features and spaces in urban areas.

Climate change is also likely to have contributed to changes or declines in nature, as a result of changing temperatures, rainfall patterns and increases in extreme weather events. These changes and their impacts on nature are likely to increase in the future and must be considered as part of nature recovery.

Wildflowers



Key pressures and opportunities

Pressures on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery

Pressures are all the things impacting the health and functioning of habitats, species and ecosystems.

Opportunities are the ways people can address these pressures by recovering habitats and species, which can also deliver wider environmental benefits.

The pressures and opportunities are summarised below and are listed under the 10 national environmental improvement goals set out in the Environment Act 2021. Many people inputted into this summary and more detail can be found in the Pressure on Nature in Dorset and Opportunities for Recovery supporting document.



Slades Farm

©Janna Bloice



Thriving plants and wildlife

Pressures
Declining biodiversity and bio abundance, habitat loss and fragmentation, poor soil health, air and water pollution and loss of natural features in urban areas all indicate the pressures on nature

Opportunities
Creating a network of naturally functioning diverse habitats, supported by more sustainable land management practices across the county will help plants and wildlife thrive

Clean air

Pressures
Air pollution from transport, industry and agriculture settles on the land and water, disrupting ecosystems by changing the types and abundance of species, reducing resilience and threatening human health

Opportunities
Air quality can be improved by increasing sustainable farming practices, wildlife-friendly gardening and low-emission sustainable transport. Specific habitat management or creation can help mitigate impacts of air pollution on sensitive sites

Clean and plentiful water

Pressures
Human activities can disrupt water ecosystems, by increasing nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediment, altering water flow and changing flood patterns. This can harm wildlife and water quality

Opportunities
Water ecosystems across catchments can be improved by reconnecting rivers to floodplains, restoring wetlands, creating river buffers, practising sustainable farming, upgrading wastewater treatment, and sustainable drainage systems

Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides

Pressures
Chemicals from farming, gardening, human and animal medicines, plastic pollution and road runoff harm wildlife and ecosystem function

Opportunities
Opportunities include reducing chemical use in farming and gardening, reducing the harmful impacts of insecticides in pet treatments, addressing plastic pollution, and monitoring chemicals in waterbodies

Maximise our resources, minimise our waste

Pressures
The extraction, production, and disposal of products from finite natural resources cause habitat loss and environmental harm

Opportunities
Former quarries and landfills can be restored into habitats, creating nature reserves for wildlife and community enjoyment. Plus, all sectors can make changes towards a circular and sustainable economy

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Using resources from nature sustainably

Pressures
Food and timber production, and building development, all put pressure on nature and can degrade soil health, fragment habitats and disrupt ecosystem function

Opportunities
Natural resources can be used in ways that support biodiversity, by using sustainable farming and forestry practices, working in collaboration and restoring habitats

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Pressures
Climate change will increase pressure on nature through extreme weather (like flooding, drought, and heatwaves), more pests and disease, coastal erosion, and species migration. This will impact how we manage habitats and farmland

Opportunities
Nature's climate resilience can be boosted by restoring damaged habitats, diversifying habitat structure, using resilient species, flexible management practices, preventing release of carbon from natural stores. Nature also offers solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation, benefiting people as well

Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards

Pressures
Flooding, drought, wildfires and other environmental hazards can damage habitats and reduce biodiversity, making isolated species more vulnerable to changes in their environments

Opportunities
Resilience can be increased by expanding habitats, creating buffer zones and increasing connectivity. Nature-based solutions can help with flood management, water quality and cooling extreme heat. Awareness raising and behaviour change can reduce human-caused risks

Enhancing biosecurity

Pressures
Disease and pests kill trees and plants and threaten animal and human health, invasive non-native species outcompete native species and disrupt ecosystem function

Opportunities
Sustainable management practices, including local native species, boost resilience to pests, diseases, and invasive species. Coordinated control and awareness programmes can further reduce or stop their impacts

Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

Pressures
People enjoying natural spaces for recreation or tourism can harm wildlife and habitats, most of the time this is not intentional

Opportunities
Celebrating how people in Dorset are helping nature recover can enable more people to get involved, showing how we can reduce our impact on nature while still enjoying and connecting with the environment

Priorities and activities

Setting out our collective priorities and activities

Dorset's 13 nature recovery priorities are shaped by the views of local people and organisations involved in the local nature recovery strategy advisory groups, engagement events and public consultation.

Nature recovery priorities are the high-level outcomes the strategy is seeking to achieve. Together these priorities focus on achieving a network of nature-rich habitats across Dorset, that help biodiversity and mean the whole ecosystem is functioning, resilient and able to deliver wider environmental benefits.

The priorities are of equal importance and are not listed in any specific order. The numbers are provided solely for ease of reference.

Potential activities are the practical actions that will help achieve the different priorities over the next 10 years. Defra calls these potential measures.

The potential activities are listed under each priority. Next to each activity is a guide to which sector the activity might be most relevant to, but this is just guidance and does not exclude others from getting involved in an activity.

Some activities appear under more than one priority because the same activity will help achieve multiple nature recovery priorities.

Most activities relate to habitats, species or sustainable land management. These activities are practical on the ground actions that will help improve and expand existing habitats, create new habitat, and improve connectivity. Other activities relate to the wider enabling actions needed to support the practical activities on the ground.

The potential activities are not exhaustive as there are many small activities involved in habitat management and restoring ecosystem function.

These activities are not prescriptive but serve as a guide to consider as part of a project or land management planning. The exact mix of activities will depend on what works best for the individual site and people involved in helping nature recover.

The **Local Habitat Map** shows the potential activities in the locations where they can have most benefit for nature recovery and/or provide wider environmental benefits.

The potential activities listed under each priority provide more detail than shown on the Local Habitat Map. For, example, where the map shows 'create or enhance grassland' as the potential activity, this may involve several activities listed under the grassland priority. It is therefore essential that the Local Habitat Map and written part of the strategy are used together.

The strategy and mapped activities provide the starting place, additional expert land management and ecological advice will often support delivery of practical activities on site.

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Guide to who the activity may be most relevant to


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Find out more about each priority on the following pages

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Priorities and activities

Priority 1 - Grasslands

Increase and enhance grassland across Dorset by creating more species-rich, larger, better-managed, and joined up areas.

The priority is to protect and expand existing species-rich grassland sites, create new sites and ensure they are connected. By increasing the variety and density of grassland species and improving the condition of grassland habitat by more nature-friendly management practices, such as stopping the use of artificial fertilisers and avoiding under or over-grazing.

Grassland habitats are areas where most of the plants are grasses. They are often maintained by people through mowing, drainage, or livestock grazing. **Grassland can be separated into the following types, depending on their biodiversity and management:**

- **improved grasslands** have been changed a lot by people to improve agricultural productivity, or to create amenity grassland for recreation. Changes include applying fertilisers, reseeding and intensive cutting or grazing. They typically have a limited variety of species of grasses and flowering plants, with white clover, perennial ryegrass and other agricultural species usually covering more than 50% of the area.
- **semi-improved grasslands** have undergone some changes through people using fertilisers, herbicides and grazing, but not as much change as improved grasslands and so have a wider diversity of plant species. This is a transitional category between improved and unimproved grasslands.
- **unimproved grasslands** have not been changed through artificial fertilisers, ploughing or reseeding and are therefore species rich. Unimproved grasslands have a high diversity of plant species, with wildflowers and sedge covering more than 30% of the area and less than 10% cover of white clover and perennial ryegrass. It is managed with low-impact practices (like traditional grazing or hay-cutting) and supports high biodiversity, including insects, birds and other wildlife.

The types of grassland that are relevant to this priority are: acid, neutral, calcareous, or marshy. Find more on ways to manage improved grassland in ways that help nature recovery in priority 7 and 8.

Typical grassland species



Field voles



Adder



Bee orchids

Nature recovery in action

The Hogchester Meadows Expansion Project was funded by Dorset National Landscape Partnership through both the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme and National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative, with additional funding from the Hogchester Conservation Trust.

The project's aim was to increase local wildflower seed availability for meadow restoration. Conventional seed harvesting methods were impractical for small, diverse grassland sites (often under 1 hectare). However, the project identified and funded compact equipment to enable accessible seed collection. Volunteers helped sort the seeds, and innovative sorting methods were developed.

Between 2022 and 2024, seed from 17 donor sites has been used to restore 25 hectares across 40 new meadow sites.



Seed harvesting using the brush harvester

©Rachel Janes

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Potential activity

Protect and sustainably manage the few remaining species-rich grassland sites and increase connectivity between these sites and other nature-rich habitats
Manage meadows and pastures to support abundant wildflowers and associated wildlife, for example, insects, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles
Create more species-rich grassland habitats
Adapt mowing and maintenance regimes in greenspaces, such as parks, sports fields, and grounds of hospitals or businesses, to create connected wild patches and meadows, and areas for insects to overwinter
Manage road verges using 'cut and collect' to restore and maintain wildflower-rich habitat
Manage verges alongside National Trails and Public Rights of Way to act as species-rich corridors, helping wildlife connect and allowing people to travel along and enjoy access to nature. This may involve a mix of grassland, hedgerows and trees
Use rotational grazing of meadows or pasture to divide a field into smaller paddocks and rotate livestock between paddocks. This allows the grass to rest and recover between grazing, provides high-energy forage and often means less chemical inputs are needed
Reduce the use of chemicals such as pesticides and fertilisers on farmland and gardens
Encourage diverse sward heights on grassland, with some areas developing into longer tussocks, pockets of scrub and keeping some bare ground to increase diversity and help join up different habitats
Make existing species-rich grassland bigger, expanding them to be big enough to protect from external pressures, enhance resilience and encourage natural processes
If improved grassland or arable land is identified as less productive for farming, convert to species-rich grassland
Create and maintain herbal leys as temporary grasslands on farmland to support pollinators, improve soil health and structure, capture carbon, reduce runoff and increase diversity of livestock forage

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Potential activity

Create species-rich grassland on renewable energy sites	
Source local seeds or green hay from existing species-rich grassland (source/arc/donor sites) to restore meadows in other places in Dorset	
Enhance and create wildflower arable field margins to help with pest control, pollination, nesting areas for birds, soil health and water management	
Enhance and create hedgerows alongside grassland to help transition between grassland and other habitat types	
Create or enhance wood pasture, parkland and/or orchards between species-rich grassland as important connecting habitat	
Create and maintain unimproved and semi-improved grassland within woodland tracks, open spaces and at woodland edges	
Increase species-richness of semi-improved grassland. For example, by reducing chemical inputs, adding in different native plant species, or using rotational grazing	
When considering acid grassland management, consider if it is appropriate to use conservation grazing to develop a mix of heathland and grassland, thereby increasing habitat and species diversity and helping join up heathland fragments	
When creating or enhancing grassland habitats, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land	

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Priorities and activities

Priority 2 - Woodlands

Dorset's woodland habitats of broadleaved, mixed, wet woodland, and scrub are sustainably managed, resilient, expanded, and better connected.

The priority is to make existing woodland habitats bigger and in better condition through enhanced and informed management and expansion. And to ensure woodland and supporting habitats are well-connected, allowing wildlife to travel between them for food, water, breeding and in response to climate change. Where necessary this may involve creating new areas of wildlife-rich habitat to fill in gaps where small areas of woodland are not well-connected to other areas. Woodland management and new woodland establishment should be consistent with the UK Forest Standard, working to the principle of: 'Right Tree, Right Place, Right Management'.

Habitat restoration and connectivity are most important for Dorset's ancient woodlands that have existed since at least 1600 and long established woodlands that have been present since at least 1893. This includes acting now to begin careful, informed and gradual restoration of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). PAWS were originally ancient woodlands but have more recently been planted with non-native species for commercial purposes.

Sustainable woodland management, known as forestry or silviculture, balances our need for forest products and benefits with the need to keep forests healthy and usable for future generations. Management practices will be chosen based on assessment of existing habitat and species and the site objectives. Below are some of the more nature-rich management practices:

- **regenerative forestry** and low **impact silvicultural systems** (sometimes known as 'continuous cover forestry') delivers benefits for climate, nature and people by taking a whole system approach. These systems increase species and structural diversity, improving resilience and provision of ecosystem services
- **irregular silviculture** is an example of a low impact silviculture system, it involves cutting down selected single or groups of trees, developing an irregular structure of varied sizes, ages and canopies
- **coppice** is another example of regenerative forestry that has a long tradition in Dorset, providing sustainable products and creating a variety of age and canopy structure across a woodland

In some circumstances these nature-rich management practices won't be appropriate, but other sustainable woodland management can be delivered that still makes some space for nature.

Trees outside of woodland are important connectors across the landscape, especially ancient and veteran trees. Activities to support trees outside of woodland are therefore included under several priorities, such as 6, 7 and 8.

Typical woodland species



Great spotted woodpecker



Tawny owl



Silver-washed fritillary

Nature recovery in action

Since 2007, the Cranborne Estate has fundamentally changed the way it manages its woodlands shifting from clear-felling to Irregular Forest Management (also known as Close-to-Nature Forestry). This approach works in harmony with the natural functions of the forest and seeks to maintain and restore a fully functioning forest ecosystem. Individual trees are selectively harvested every 5 to 12 years. The resulting gaps are filled by natural regeneration from the seed of surrounding mature trees. Over time this results in a resilient forest of intimately mixed species and ages with high variability in degrees of canopy openness. The method delivers multiple ecosystem services, including the sustainable production of high-quality timber, and the provision of habitat for a rich and diverse fauna including many species of birds and bats.



Norway spruce plantation in conversion to an irregular forest

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Potential activity	
Manage woodland to improve ecological condition, by all woodland managers creating and implementing a woodland management plan that is UK Forestry Standard compliant. Following a management plan helps maximise biodiversity, and wider environmental and economic benefits	
For individual ancient and veteran trees, wood pasture, and parkland, create and implement bespoke management plans	
Protect, enhance and connect the remaining ancient woodland sites and ancient and veteran trees	
Enhance the structure and diversity of existing woodlands, by increasing the variety of ages of trees, canopy structure, and species. As well as retaining and creating open space and standing and fallen deadwood	
Act now to undertake gradual and informed restoration on Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Start by protecting and enhancing existing native woodland features like veteran trees and plants below the trees, then gradually change all the trees to native broadleaf woodland as quickly as is ecologically sensible	
Integrate agroforestry systems on farms and agricultural businesses, this involves growing trees, hedges and shelterbelts on farmland alongside crops and grazing livestock. For example, silvopasture or silvoarable. Increasing trees across the farm landscape can help connect woodlands, boost soil fertility, retain water and provide shade and forage for livestock	
Where restocking existing woodlands, and appropriate to site objectives, use natural regeneration, from existing seed sources to improve the structure and resilience of woodlands	
Expand and buffer native woodlands, using natural colonisation where seed sources are present. Support the development of woodland, scrub and different types of 'woody' mosaic habitats	
In woodlands on acid soils, retain, buffer and connect heathland remnants to support species movement and restoration, for example by managing rides and tracks. In these areas it should be a priority to remove conifers, and restore mire systems with scrub and wet woodland components	
As part of woodland habitat creation or enhancement, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land, creating or enhancing ponds where appropriate.	

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Potential activity	
Establish new woodlands consistent with the UK Forest Standard, applying the 'right tree, right place' principle. Ideally create new woodland that buffers, expands and links existing woodlands, especially ancient woodlands	
Source and use a diverse range of bio-secure trees and plants for tree and woodland establishment projects. Use a broad and mixed palette suited to objectives. Use native species where possible, if using non-native species to provide climate resilience, prioritise near-native species and never use species that are likely to become invasive or plant large scale monocultures	
Restore and establish new areas of wood pasture, parkland, and traditional orchards to increase biodiversity and create corridors for species to move between adjacent woodlands. Manage these habitats to maximise diversity of species and structure, for example, restorative pruning, seasonal grazing	
Set up or use a community tree nursery to supply, bio-secure, locally sourced and grown native trees for community tree planting projects. This could include individuals growing trees from seed at home before sharing with others	
Enhance and create hedgerows to ensure a diverse mix of tree and hedgerow plants and stagger the management cycle	
Maintain active management of coppice stands and woodlands, and restore lapsed coppice woodlands, bringing these into management, delivering environmental benefits, wood products and economic benefit	
Support the continuation of the hazel coppice industry and related rural industries such as hedge laying, to ensure associated woodland and hedgerow management continues	
Increase the productivity of our native and mixed woodlands, using sustainable practices, to reduce imports of wood products from countries where their production is impacting nature and the environment. Support and develop local woodland related industries, skills and markets	
Where possible implement Minimum Intervention Areas to enable a more natural, unmanaged, woodland structure to evolve, this will benefit wildlife species such as bats	
Maintain and increase street trees to enhance the canopy cover in towns and villages (see priority 6 for more on street trees and urban forests)	
Coordinate landscape management of deer, grey squirrel and invasive species as outlined under priority 12	

Priorities and activities

Priority 3 - Heathlands

Heathland habitats are better, bigger, and connected, and where there are gaps, more wildlife habitat is created.

The Dorset heaths are some of the biggest remaining areas of internationally important lowland heathland in the UK, including dry and wet heath. This priority reflects Dorset's special responsibility to support the exceptionally high biodiversity of these existing heathland habitats and make them better through reducing damaging recreational pressures and changes to management.

Where possible heathland habitats can be made bigger through expanding them, and more joined up to enable wildlife to travel between them for food, water, breeding and to increase resilience to climate change. Where necessary this may involve creating a range of new habitats to fill in gaps and connect heathlands with other habitat types.

Many fragments of Dorset heaths are near towns and urban areas, so it is also important that heathland is protected from risks like wildfires, pollution, loss of vegetation and damaging recreational use. This can be done through heathland mitigation work that protects heathlands while also enabling development to continue.

Typical heathland species



Nightjar | Dartford warbler | Heath grasshopper

Nature recovery in action

The Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit, covering 1,370 hectares across Hartland Moor, Stoborough Heath and Arne at the heart of the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve, is using domestic livestock to mimic the actions of the large wild herbivores that once shaped and created the habitats that our heathland species need.

Alongside the cattle, ponies, and deer that already graze the heath, woolly Mangalitsa pigs have now been introduced. Pigs dig and root through the soil, creating essential bare patches that foster biodiversity, providing nesting spots for species like ants, and solitary bees and creating space for seeds to germinate where otherwise they might struggle. Dark soil warms up quickly, making ideal basking spots for insects.

Alongside the reintroduction of beavers and the rewetting of peatlands, these projects to restore natural processes are putting the Purbeck Heaths at the forefront of nature recovery in the UK.



©Mark Singleton

Pigs grazing on Purbeck Heath

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Potential activity	
Protect existing heathland sites, managing them to improve their condition and increase connectivity between fragmented sites, for example by managing rides and tracks	
Manage heathland to have a varied structure of heather and bare ground and to stop the colonisation of invasive plant species. For example, through light extensive grazing, mowing, heather and turf cutting, and some licenced small-scale burns. Burning is often not the most appropriate management method, licencing, consultation and regulations must be followed before burns	
Expand and connect current and potential heathland sites so they are big enough to protect from external pressures and encourage natural process	
Restore dry and wet heath habitats to improve ecosystem function, restoring wet heaths and valley mires alongside dry heaths allows natural hydrological processes to function. In some places this will enable peat formation, which in turn captures and stores carbon	
Manage some open areas in forests, such as heathland, wetland and peatland, to provide a network of habitats for wildlife, connected with existing habitats beyond the woodland site. Maintain woodland tracks, edges and rides to support heathland connectivity	
Reduce the risk of fires to protect precious heathland habitats and prevent wildfire spreading to nearby homes and communities. For example, raising awareness that it's illegal to barbecue on heathlands or sharing practical advice for people to protect their homes from wildfire	
Reduce pressures from recreational disturbance on heathlands. For example, providing suitable alternative natural greenspaces (SANGs) and raising awareness of ways people can enjoy heathlands responsibly, by continuing the work of Dorset Heaths Partnership	

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Potential activity

Managing heathland sites with high levels of air pollution by more frequent heath management, more intensive grazing or soil stripping to take away nutrient rich soil and invasive plants and create bare ground. Continue wider efforts to protect heathlands from air pollution	
Buffer and expand heathland sites by reducing intensive farming on nearby land and consider changing land management practices or heathland restoration on suitable land	
As part of heathland habitat creation or enhancement, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land	
Restore heathland where appropriate, following the open habitats policy. This may include removing conifers and managing natural regeneration	
Explore opportunities to restore heathland from conifer plantation, especially where this can expand and connect existing heathland, restore disrupted hydrology to favour peat formation or utilise less productive conifer plantations	
Apply learning from recent changes in the management of conifer forests on former heathland in Purbeck to other relevant parts of Dorset	
Create and enhance bare ground areas on heathland to benefit plants, invertebrates, and sand lizard	

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Priorities and activities

Priority 4 - Rivers, lakes and wetlands

Rivers and lakes are naturally functioning, and wetland habitats are better, bigger, and connected to support wildlife and provide clean water and flood protection.

Dorset has rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, as well as wetland habitats including bog, fen, swamp, flush and inundation. Restoration and protection of chalk streams is particularly important as Dorset has a special responsibility for these globally rare habitats. Another important focus is the protection and enhancement of freshwater biodiversity in the Dorset and New Forest Important Freshwater Landscape.

Freshwater habitats need to be enhanced, maintained and restored where they've been lost or disconnected from each other. This doesn't just include the river corridor, but covers the whole water catchment, from individual sections of rivers and lakes to the plants in the riparian corridors, to surrounding wetland habitats. Areas of wetland can also be restored within other habitats to create wet woodland, wet grassland and wet heathland, and small wetland features fed by springs and groundwater seepage. Small wetland features like seepage springs are important for wildlife, they are found where permeable geology overlays impermeable geology (typically Greensand), and often on valley sides above headwater streams.

Water needs to be clean to provide a healthy home to wildlife, and for humans to use for recreation and for water supplies to drink and wash in. Clean doesn't just mean the water looks clear, it's about having appropriate nutrient levels and reducing pollution. Rivers must also be cool enough to function well, especially as climate change brings warmer temperatures.

Improvements to rivers, lakes and wetlands can help slow the flow of water across the landscape and provide natural flood management. Natural storage of water in the land will also help create a more sustainable supply of water. This is especially important as climate change will increase the risk of flood and drought.

Typical river, lake and wetland species



Otter



Sea trout



Rounded leaved sundew

Nature recovery in action

Healthy peatlands support fantastically diverse and highly specialised wildlife. However, Dorset's peatlands are fragmented and in poor condition due to historic management. The Dorset Peat Partnership, part of Dorset Catchment Partnerships, is led by Dorset Wildlife Trust and includes 6 other landowning partners. Funding for the partnership comes from Defra's Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, the Wytch Farm Landscape Access and Enhancement Fund and others. **The partnership is restoring 17 peatland sites across Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation over 3 years by:**

- removing some trees where they are drying out peat through transpiration and breaking up peat structure with their roots
- blocking historic drains to rewet peat and stop its degradation
- flailing scrub and tussocky grasses to create conditions for peat-forming sphagnum mosses

Nature recovery outcomes include habitats for important species restored, connected and enlarged, climate risks mitigated - for example reduced impacts of high rainfall, drought and wildfire, and carbon emissions from degraded peat stopped and conditions created to permanently lock in new carbon over time.



Wetland restoration at Greenlands Mire

©Dorset Catchment Partnership

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Potential activity
Restore and enhance chalk streams and winterbourne streams and the important species they support
Protect, enhance and connect Dorset's few remaining wetland sites
Create buffers of different plants, trees and woodlands along the river corridor (riparian planting or water body buffering) to create a diverse structure of shady areas to keep rivers cool and warmer open areas for fish spawning
Reconnect rivers to their historic floodplain and re-establish dynamic wetland habitats
Create or restore areas of wetland within existing woodland, heathland or grassland
Carry out river restoration. For example, re-meander rivers that have been straightened to allow the water to take a natural path or put natural materials into the river channel to slow the flow of water (leaky dams)
Improve slurry management to make best use of slurry as a source of organic nutrients, while also reducing risk of pollution into water courses
Use sustainable farming practices that improve soil structure to reduce runoff and improve soil health, for example cover crops, no till and agroforestry
Reduce the use of chemicals in farming, gardening and veterinary medicines. This includes preventative use of pesticides to treat parasites of domestic pets (as these often end up contaminating water bodies)
Create buffer strips near waterbodies on farms, especially headwater streams. Buffer zones help reduce runoff of sediment and chemicals into the water, prevent livestock destabilising the riverbanks, and connect habitats in rivers and on land
Create buffers of plants and trees along highways to slow water and reduce run-off of pollution from the roads
Create, restore or protect priority ponds and adjacent habitats to provide homes for rare and endangered species
Use an ecosystem-based fisheries management approach and sustainable aquaculture practices
Remove man-made barriers in rivers that restrict fish movement or provide ways to swim around them. This in turn could lead to restoration of much larger areas of habitat that were lost due to the barrier. This may require coordination with multiple organisations and relevant permissions to be in place

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Potential activity
Restore and 're-wet' peatlands to provide wildlife habitat and act as sponges that filter water to improve water quality, regulate water flow, increase flood protection and improve carbon storage
Introduce mixed age cyclical reed cutting into reedbed management plans where possible, creating mixed age reed stands and enhancing habitats. Explore the potential to use materials from reedbed management to supply bioenergy, or once water quality improves, the thatching industry to help reduce its carbon footprint
Use permeable materials if creating hard surfaces in urban areas, such as driveways, to direct rainwater into natural soakaways and back into the ground, rather than the wastewater system. Limit use of sealed surfaces like concrete and artificial grass that water quickly runs over quickly and into drains. This can help reduce flood risk and reduce the number of storm overflow discharges
Use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in towns and villages, such as rain gardens, swales, street trees and ponds to slow and clean water, and provide wetland or boggy habitat. This can help reduce flood risk and reduce the number of storm overflow discharges
Reduce the risk of prescription medication reaching and polluting waterways, by taking medications according to prescription and using pharmacies to dispose of any medications that are no longer required
Improve maintenance of septic tanks, cesspits and sewage treatment works, and upgrade infrastructure, to reduce pollution reaching waterbodies
Consider the role of beavers in maintaining and creating wetlands, follow all licencing procedures for beaver releases and plan the management of potential impacts on infrastructure, livelihoods and buildings
Support communities where free-living beavers are present through the Dorset Beaver Management Group by providing advice on management requirements in response to beaver activity
Reduce the volume of water abstraction from the chalk aquifer, to support nature recovery of chalk streams
If working on greensand or chalk geology that may contain small wetland features like seepage springs, seek specialist advice about their conservation and recovery. Explore opportunities for sustainable use of spring water to increase water supply resilience in farming

Priorities and activities

Priority 5 - Coastal

The coastal strip is enhanced and restored to safeguard key habitats that protect rare and vulnerable species and space is created for cliff top and intertidal habitats as the coastline retreats.

Dorset's coastal habitats include cliffs, rocky shores, saltmarshes, sand dunes, shingle and sandy beaches, intertidal habitats and seagrass meadows. The priority is to restore these habitats to good condition, support natural processes to take place, and build resilience to future pressures such as erosion, sea level rise, tourism, recreation and industry.

Protecting and enhancing the coastal strip is essential for the important species and ecosystems that depend on it. Restoration of historical coastal habitats, such as oyster reefs, that were destroyed by over exploitation a long time ago is particularly important.

The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and its internationally recognised rocks, fossils and landforms supports a range of ecosystems, such as rocky and sandy shorelines, coastal saltmarshes and reedbeds, and deciduous temperate forests. Key coastal water bodies such as Poole, Christchurch, Portland, and Weymouth harbours, along with The Fleet, host a wide variety of wildlife in their mudflats, saltmarsh and shallow waters. Protection and recovery of nature in these harbours is closely linked to nature's recovery along the river catchments that flow into them.

Cliff top habitats are particularly vulnerable to being squeezed by coastal retreat and should be given more room to spread and retreat landward. Similarly, intertidal habitats face pressure where rising sea levels meet man-made flood defences, creating new space for these habitats is essential. All flood defence and coastal infrastructure projects should embed nature recovery into their design from the outset, building ecological resilience into future coastal management.

Typical coastal species


Peregrine falcon


Kelp


Limpet

Nature recovery in action

The Environment Agency, RSPB and Natural England are working together to adapt approximately 150 hectares of the Moors at Arne into a diverse wetland habitat. With sea levels rising, important habitat for wildlife all around Poole Harbour could be lost over the next 30 years. Where rising waters press against fixed sea defences 'coastal squeeze' occurs, this means a loss of inter-tidal features such as mudflats and salt marsh. New places for coastal wildlife will need to be created to keep the natural features of the lost landscape, whilst flood risk to homes and businesses from the sea continues to be managed.



The Moors at Arne project

©Environment Agency

Potential activity
Reduce nutrients entering coastal waters through changes to farming practices, development and wastewater treatment
Reduce pressures from recreational disturbance, for example, helping water sport users, tourists, wildlife spotters and coastal dog walkers understand how to enjoy the coast without disrupting sensitive habitats and species. For example, by continuing the work of BARI – The Bird & Recreation Initiative
Create new areas of intertidal habitats such as salt marsh and mudflats in response to sea levels rising against fixed flood and coastal erosion defences (coastal squeeze)
Design habitat creation into flood defence and other coastal engineering works, for example, artificial reefs, rockpools, sand dunes and artificial nesting sites
Create new coastal habitats inland as part of managed realignment to accommodate and compensate for the expected shift of coastal systems towards the land as sea levels rise
For coastal areas with high numbers of people visiting, use a mixture of methods to make more space for wildlife. For example, changing access patterns to give wildlife more space and providing alternative opportunities for people to connect with coastal nature, or creating areas for wildlife on nearby land that will be less disturbed, such as ground nesting habitat for birds on adjacent undisturbed fields
Seek to restore lost coastal and intertidal habitats such as seagrass beds, oyster reefs, mussel beds, saltmarsh and sand dunes, as improvements in underlying environmental conditions allow
Pull back from intensive farming in fields close to cliff edges, to create space for cliff top habitats and wildlife to survive and move as the coastline recedes through cliff falls and landslips
Connect habitats along the coast with habitats inland and support wildlife corridors
Create and enhance alternative sites for people to enjoy recreation, such as dog walking, to reduce pressure on sensitive coastal areas
Tackle plastic pollution in coastal waters by promoting ways to reduce single-use plastic and microplastics and reducing litter left on beaches and further up the river catchment
Enhance the coastal margin as a green corridor connecting habitats along the coast, as part of the Coastal Wildbelt initiative, the coastal margin spans from the South West Coast Path and the King Charles III England Coast Path to the mean low-water mark

Priorities and activities

Priority 6 - Hedgerows

Hedgerows are maintained, enhanced and expanded to support wildlife and provide corridors that connect habitats across the county.

The priority is to protect and expand existing hedges, increase wildlife-friendly hedgerow management methods, and establish new hedgerows.

Hedgerows are lines of trees or shrubs, often planted as boundary lines around fields or gardens, they can include features like banks, walls, ditches, fences and gates within the hedge. Hedgerows are a Habitat of Principle Importance and are of high ecological value, even hedgerows consisting of mainly one native species qualify as priority habitat.

In Dorset, hedgerows are a key feature of the landscape, they perform a vital role in supporting some of the UK's rarest species such as brown hairstreak butterflies and dormice. When managed to have a diverse structure and species mix, hedges can support a variety of wildlife, such as birds, bats, hedgehogs, lizards and pollinators. Hedgerows are also corridors that help wildlife travel between nature-rich areas, providing important connectivity across the farmed landscape and between urban areas. Hedgerows are integral to the landscape and its ecological function.

Hedgerows also help reduce soil erosion, run-off, and flooding by slowing the flow of water across the landscape, which can in turn help improve water quality. They help absorb pollution and carbon from the air, helping to improve air quality and tackle climate change, as well as providing shelter and shade for livestock.

The goal is to have thick, diverse and dense hedgerows, but hedgerows are dynamic living habitats, so their management also needs to be adaptive. Managing hedgerows on a cycle can help ensure they continue to thrive for nature. The Adams Hedgerow Management Scale adapted by PTES is a helpful tool to understand where a hedge currently is within the management cycle:

- dense and well managed hedges
- over-trimmed hedges
- tall and overgrown hedges
- recently rejuvenated hedges



Typical hedgerow species



Hawthorn



Oak



Bumblebee

Nature recovery in action

The Great Big Dorset Hedge (GBDH) project connects community volunteers and farmers in a shared goal of restoring and expanding hedgerows across Dorset. Farmers can sign up to have their hedgerows surveyed by volunteers, the survey report provides farmers with key information on hedge health to inform their management plan and to secure funding to maintain and enhance their hedges through Environmental Land Management schemes.

The project supports hedge planting activities, and some volunteers have been learning about traditional hedge laying practices from local experts. Currently, over 400 volunteers are coordinated by a team of specialist contractors, as they undertake surveys and planting projects across more than 100 farms. More volunteers, more specialist contractors and more farmers are welcome - if you'd like to get involved email greatbigdorsethedge@gmail.com



GBDH volunteers hedge planting at Sherford Farm, Wareham

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Potential activity	
Survey hedgerows to understand current structure and diversity and identify what restoration work is needed. Community volunteers can be a great help to do this at scale	
Manage a hedge on a cycle, such as the Adams Hedgerow Management Scale adapted by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES)	
Improve hedge structure by avoiding cutting the hedge to the same height each year, instead use incremental cutting to trim hedges about 10cm higher and wider each time	
Reduce hedge cutting to every 2 or 3 years. Over a larger site, cut a selection of hedges across different parts of the site on rotation	
Leave cutting until late winter (December to January) to allow wildlife to feed on berries and fruit through winter, but before the hedges start growing in spring	
Do not cut hedgerows during the bird nesting season (1 March – 31 August) to avoid disturbing nests, eggs or chicks which are protected by law. If you discover nesting birds outside of the bird nesting season dates, it is still a crime to disturb them. Birds often start setting up territory before the season begins, so it is ideal to get cutting done in December to January. Follow national hedgerow management rules, which include exemptions for situations like managing hedgerows overhanging roads for driver safety	
Protect old trees within the hedgerow, and identify some new plants within the hedge that will be allowed to grow up into mature hedgerow trees	
Fill in gaps in hedgerows by planting native shrubs and trees to improve structure and diversity	
Encourage a diverse range of tree, shrub and plant species in hedges, as well as scrub and wildflower banks alongside hedgerows	

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Potential activity	
Create grassy buffer strips alongside hedges with a variety of wildflowers to increase diversity and connectivity	
Plant new hedges with native trees (ideally every 20m) and shrub species that are found in the local area, and use a mix of different species to support a variety of wildlife	
When creating or enhancing hedgerows, plant double hedgerows where possible as these provide sheltered corridors favoured by bats	
Maintain or establish hedges in places that will connect habitats, such as other hedges, woodlands, grasslands or orchards	
Consider using hedge laying or hedge coppicing to help restore hedgerows	
Keep and enhance existing hedgerows within building developments, and use hedgerows rather than fences and walls around homes, gardens, footpaths, roads and public greenspaces	
Where appropriate, allow hedges to grow tall (over 3m) to give bats the opportunity to hang up and feed, while keeping a diverse and dense hedge structure overall	
Create or enhance scrub alongside hedgerows as important transitional habitat and increase connectivity between hedgerows and other habitat types	

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Priorities and activities

Priority 7 - Urban

Our towns and villages have increased nature-rich spaces, so wildlife can travel between buildings, roads, parks, gardens and the wider countryside.

This priority is to make more nature-rich spaces in our towns and villages, to provide wildlife habitat between buildings and roads. This can be achieved through various actions such as changing how we manage gardens and recreation spaces like parks and golf courses or including more street trees and natural drainage.

Connecting urban nature areas with wilder natural habitats in the countryside not only supports wildlife but also enhances our interaction with nature. Increasing connection with nature can benefit people's mental and physical health and help address inequalities.

Spending time enjoying natural spaces or being surrounded by natural features like green walls and ponds provides direct health benefits. Whilst increasing space for nature near our homes and communities can provide indirect health benefits such as protection from air or water pollution, shading from extreme heat, flood protection, climate adaptation, job creation and increased economic activity.

Typical urban species

Hedgehog

Slow worm

Common frog



Nature recovery in action

Wildlife garden at Kinson Recreation Ground: Kinson recreation ground is 3 hectares of urban park with short cut amenity grass and no trees or hedges on site. An underused corner of the site has been transformed from a green desert into a wildlife-rich site, now featuring a pond, meadow, fruit trees, hedges, along with sunny banks and rocky habitats. There is seating and an information board inviting people to pause, relax, and connect with nature.

This project, funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in 2022 and delivered by The Parks Foundation who are a charity improving BCP's parks, is part of the BCP Nature Recovery Network. It aims to enhance habitat and biodiversity, engage communities, and improve the appearance of 8 urban parks within some of BCP Council's most densely populated and disadvantaged wards.

The work at Kinson Recreation ground was supported by local volunteers and residents who got involved in the practical work and are now helping to look after the green space. Other parks involved in this nature recovery initiative include Branksome Recreation Ground, Haskell's Recreation Ground, Jumpers Common, Kinson Manor Playing Fields, Muscliff Park, Pelhams Park, and Slade's Farm.



Kinson recreation ground

©BCP Council

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Potential activity
Use wildlife-friendly gardening practices in homes, businesses, community growing projects, churchyards and similar spaces
Adapt mowing and maintenance regimes in green spaces such as parks, sports fields, and grounds of hospitals, schools or businesses. Create wild patches and meadows, and areas for insects to overwinter
Create sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) features in towns and villages, such as rain gardens, swales, street trees and ponds to slow water and provide wetland or boggy habitat
Increase other kinds of urban greening such as living walls and green roofs, on both existing and new buildings, or other infrastructure such as bus shelters
Create more nature-rich spaces in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities. For example, gardens or allotments for students to grow plants and food, and wildflower strips around sports fields
Create more nature-rich spaces on golf courses, or consider changing land-use where these facilities are underused or provided for people to enjoy elsewhere
Sustainably manage existing trees in towns and villages, replacing these where they are removed or lost due to age or disease
Increase tree canopy cover by establishing and maintaining more trees in gardens, parks, and along streets, focusing on areas that have the lowest tree equity scores. For Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, follow the guiding principles outlined in BCP Urban Forest Strategy
In new developments, keep as many existing trees on site as possible and if trees are lost, carry out new tree planting, with numbers greater than those removed. Favour local and native species, or new species that provide a similar ecological function if more resilient or suited to the urban environment
Maintain and establish new fruit trees and orchards within public spaces. And establish related community groups and ways for people to use the fruit and care for the trees

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Potential activity
Continue and grow the number of community farms, allotments and other growing projects using nature-friendly practices such as no chemicals and rainwater harvesting
Create dead wood habitats such as standing dead wood, log piles and dead hedges to provide homes for wildlife, using locally sourced material
Explore the suitability of newer methods of creating woodland. For example, the Miyawaki method involves planting a large number of seedlings at once, to replicate natural regeneration as the fastest growing saplings will thin out the rest
Increase the use of hedges, rather than just fences and walls, around homes, gardens, and public open spaces
Continue and expand Dorset's successful 'cut and collect' approach to road verge management, to restore and maintain wildflower-rich habitat
Manage verges, hedgerows and trees alongside road and rail infrastructure to create wildlife corridors and consider installing green crossings to reduce habitat fragmentation
Manage verges alongside National Trails and Public Rights of Way to act as species-rich corridors, helping wildlife connect and allowing people to travel along and enjoy access to nature. This may involve a mix of grassland, hedgerows and trees
Explore opportunities to convert underused streets or neglected areas into small 'pocket parks'
Use permeable materials if creating hard surfaces in urban areas, such as driveways, to direct rainwater into soakaways that flow back down into the ground instead of the wastewater system and therefore reduce flood risk. Limit use of sealed surfaces like concrete and artificial grass that water runs over quickly, flowing into drains and the wastewater system
Use water butts to catch rainwater and use this to water plants during drier months. This water is good for the garden as it's rich in nutrients and helps conserve drinking water

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Potential activity	
Increase natural darkness by using timers and movement sensors on household and street lighting, to reduce light pollution that disturbs the natural rhythms of wildlife, for example, bats, birds, insects. Choose lights that are not too bright and warmer shades, then position the lights as low as possible and pointing downwards rather than into the sky. Also draw curtains or blinds after dark once the lights are on, if possible use thick or blackout lined curtains	
Make nature recovery a key consideration in development, following policy and guidance on biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure, urban greening, sustainable drainage systems (SuDs), sustainable/active travel, landscape character, suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANGs), and habitat restoration on minerals and waste sites	
Include species enhancements in the design of new buildings and developments. For example, bird and bat boxes/bricks, bee bricks, hedgehog highways. And add these to existing buildings and gardens too	
Consider and mitigate impacts on bats and birds before starting any renovation or repair works on buildings or structures, so that species can continue using the site once the works are complete	
Support initiatives for communities to take care of nature spaces near to homes and community buildings	
Protect or create patches of bare rock habitat amongst other habitat in urban spaces because these support wildlife such as invertebrates, lichens and mosses. For example, leaving bare rock exposed in cuttings, natural stone buildings or keeping a rock face in quarry restoration	
Protect and enhance green corridors that connect up nature areas to help wildlife travel through towns, and often provide trails for people to travel along too	

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Priorities and activities

Priority 8 - Farming

Sustainable farming practices are widely adopted to produce good quality food in harmony with nature.

Sustainable farming practices include many different approaches to farming that aim to reduce environmental impacts and increase environmental benefits. How farmland is managed impacts the diversity and abundance of wildlife it provides space for, and how easily wildlife can move across the landscape between areas of nature-rich habitat.

Sustainable farming practices minimise the impact of farming on habitats and ecosystem functioning, with a focus on soil health, water quality, increasing diversity, minimising chemical use and improving habitat connectivity. As well as there being variation in the different methods and approaches, there is also variety in how we refer to sustainable farming practices, including:

- agroecology
- organic farming
- high nature status farming
- regenerative farming
- permaculture
- biodynamic farming
- nature-friendly farming

Sustainable farming practices need to be both economically and environmentally sustainable, providing good quality local food, local jobs, profit for the farmer, and an increased abundance and diversity of wildlife and habitats.

Typical farming species



Corn bunting

Brown hare

Corn marigold

Nature recovery in action

George and Dougal Hosford manage 800 rented hectares at Traveller's Rest Farm near Blandford. They have been gradually transitioning to regenerative farming since giving up ploughing 20 years ago. The farm includes species rich, unimproved and improved grasslands. A herd of pasture-reared beef cows is considered critical to the sustainable management of both grassland and 650 hectares of arable crops.

The farm focuses on sustainable practices whilst at the same time maintaining financial resilience. Soil health is a priority, and a gradual reduction in the use of synthetic chemical and fertiliser inputs, combined with a more biological approach, is supporting both biodiversity and crop yields. Seventy-four hectares of strategically placed wildflower margins and plots form the basis for a system of integrated pest control, encouraging beneficial predatory insects to control common pest species as an alternative to insecticides. These areas benefit pollinators and a wide range of insects.

To prevent grasses from overwhelming the wildflowers, they mow and remove the cuttings most autumns, turning them into hay for their cows or compost for the soil. A return to hay making has eliminated the use of plastic bale wrap. Direct drilling has replaced minimal till crop establishment. With the decrease in synthetic inputs and soil disturbance, general life in the soil has noticeably increased. This and other management have led to a significant increase in numbers of skylark, woodlark, cornbunting, yellowhammers, linnets, finches, starlings and many other birds.

Diversity is key. A wide range of crops is being grown, sometimes 2 crops are grown at the same time (bicropping) with very low inputs. The increase in insect life in these fields is noticeable. As passionate stewards of the land, the Hosfords also harvest and sow their own native seed mixes, recognising their ecological value and adaptability. They are motivated by a belief in fostering balance in their farm ecosystem and see food and nature going hand in hand.



Pasture-reared beef cows

©Dougal Hosford

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Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Increase the use of mixed farming and the diversity in crops, livestock and wildlife. For example, having a mix of grazing livestock and crops, improving crop rotations and increasing structural and species diversity of plants, trees and hedgerows on farm	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers
Review and increase understanding of current chemical use on farm, create and follow a management plan to minimise amounts used and losses into the wider environment beyond the farm	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers
Reduce or stop chemical use such as fertilisers, pesticides and some veterinary medicines for livestock that persist in livestock dung	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers; Public bodies
Adopt farming practices that support soil health for example by reducing the frequency and depth of tillage, avoiding leaving soil bare by using under sowing, cover and catch crops, keeping living roots in the soil, feeding the soil with plant residues, compost and manure	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers
Work with neighbours to take an integrated approach to managing cross-holding features ssuch as hedges, buffer strips, margins, water courses, slopes and geodiversity features	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers; Partnerships & Connectors
Work with neighbouring farms and other partners to coordinate nature recovery activities across the landscape and share equipment and knowledge. For example, by joining a farmer cluster or landscape scale recovery project	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers; Communities & Individuals; Public bodies; Nature & Environment Sector; Partnerships & Connectors
Create, maintain and enhance a variety of habitats for a broad range of wildlife during different stages of their lifecycle and different seasons of the year, for example, areas planted for birds or pollinators	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers
Plan where wildlife habitats are created or enhanced across the farm so that they provide corridors or stepping stones that join up with other habitats, to allow wildlife to travel across the farm and wider landscape	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers
Support young and adult populations of pollinating insects that are critical to pollinating wildflowers and crops. For example, maintain flower-rich grass margins, blocks or in-field strips, and reduce chemical use	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers
If extracting small amounts of mineral for other works on farm, consider whether appropriate to leave some exposed bare rock, sand or gravel habitat for wildlife. This can also be a learning opportunity for others to observe and understand more about geology	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers; Nature & Environment Sector
As part of habitat creation or enhancement, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers; Nature & Environment Sector
Consider growing perennial energy crops on less productive land, rather than annual short rotation energy crops, to deliver benefits for soil health and space for wildlife	Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers

Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers

Businesses, Industry & Economy

Nature & Environment Sector

Communities & Individuals

Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity

Explore options for improving slurry management, for example, covered slurry stores, larger 6 month+ capacity storage, adaptive grazing to use grass more strategically, reduction of maize planting and reducing stock numbers	
Explore options for cross-catchment trading of slurry and manure, to move excess nutrients from livestock farms over to arable farms where it can replace artificial fertiliser	
Conserve and enhance populations of wildlife with strong associations to farmland, including arable specialists, such as corn bunting and brown hare, and grassland specialists, such as starling and harvest mouse	
Use integrated pest management, for example, beetle banks	
Use a range of grazing practices and breeds, suited to the type of habitat or land-use. For example, conservation grazing to maintain semi-natural habitats, or rotational grazing on pasture	
Reduce farm plastic use and join a plastic recycling scheme	
Maintain or introduce in-field trees or agroforestry systems on farms, this involves growing trees, hedges and shelterbelts on farmland alongside crops and grazing livestock. For example, silvopasture or silvoarable. Increasing trees across the farmed landscape can help connect woodlands, boost soil fertility, retain water and provide shade and forage for livestock	
Enhance, create and manage hedgerows as important wildlife corridors between farmland and other habitats, including a diversity of hedgerow trees	
Create buffer strips near waterbodies on farms to reduce runoff, prevent livestock destabilising the riverbanks, and connect habitats in rivers and on land	
Manage habitats to provide biodiversity net gain units or nutrient mitigation credits	
Support initiatives that improve marketing of local sustainably produced food, and help connect farmers and consumers	
Explore how Agri-Tech can help deliver sustainable farming practices and healthy food production	
Support farmers and land managers to work together to enable efficient woodland management, sale of timber wood products and best practice on management and biosecurity	

Priorities and activities

Priority 9 - Natural processes

Natural process-led conservation approaches are used more widely to support functioning ecosystems and shape an ever-changing landscape.

This priority is about focusing on restoring natural processes as the end goal, rather than a specific habitat or mosaic of habitats. Properly functioning natural processes will result in more dynamic habitats, which many wildlife species will benefit from, and will allow transition zones to develop as one habitat changes into another. This is known as a kaleidoscope model, as opposed to a mosaic model of fixed habitat patches in the landscape. Enabling this landscape change is likely to require larger areas and sufficient time to work effectively, and some species and habitats will still require targeted interventions. Understanding of the geology in an area is essential to inform what natural processes are, or could be, active there.



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Nature recovery in action

The Wild Woodbury Nature Recovery Project at Bere Regis is an innovative conservation initiative led by Dorset Wildlife Trust, aimed at transforming former agricultural land into a thriving wildlife habitat.

Spanning over 150 hectares, this area focuses on rewilding by restoring natural processes, enhancing biodiversity, and creating a mosaic of different habitats including woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands. One of the natural processes in this project is using domestic cattle, ponies and pigs to graze the land to copy the natural grazing patterns of extinct wild animals.

By allowing nature to take the lead, the site encourages the return of native species such as birds, insects and other wildlife, fostering a more resilient ecosystem. The project also engages the local community, offering opportunities for education and involvement in habitat restoration and sustainable land management practices.

Wild Woodbury represents a significant step in tackling biodiversity loss while addressing climate change through nature-based solutions.



Wild Woodbury

Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers

Businesses, Industry & Economy

Nature & Environment Sector

Communities & Individuals

Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Allow water to flow naturally across the landscape, for example, re-meander straightened rivers, stage zero river restoration, restore small flushes and ponds, and recreate wet areas within other habitats like grassland, woodland and heathland	
Allow trees and woodlands to establish through natural colonisation where seed sources are present or through succession, rather than planting	
Using an integrated pest management approach with grazing animals, for example, allow dung beetles to help tackle parasites and fertilise and aerate the soil	
Use informed naturalistic or rotational grazing management to mimic natural grazing patterns of wild herbivores	
Use browsing animals, that eat woody vegetation rather than grass, to positively impact woodland ecological condition and ensure a mixture of woodland canopy, scrub and open habitats across landscapes	
Ensure the grazing pressures of endemic deer and introduced livestock are balanced, delivering the ecological improvement of woodland, scrub and open habitats	
Rewild some areas to enable the mass recovery of ecosystems	

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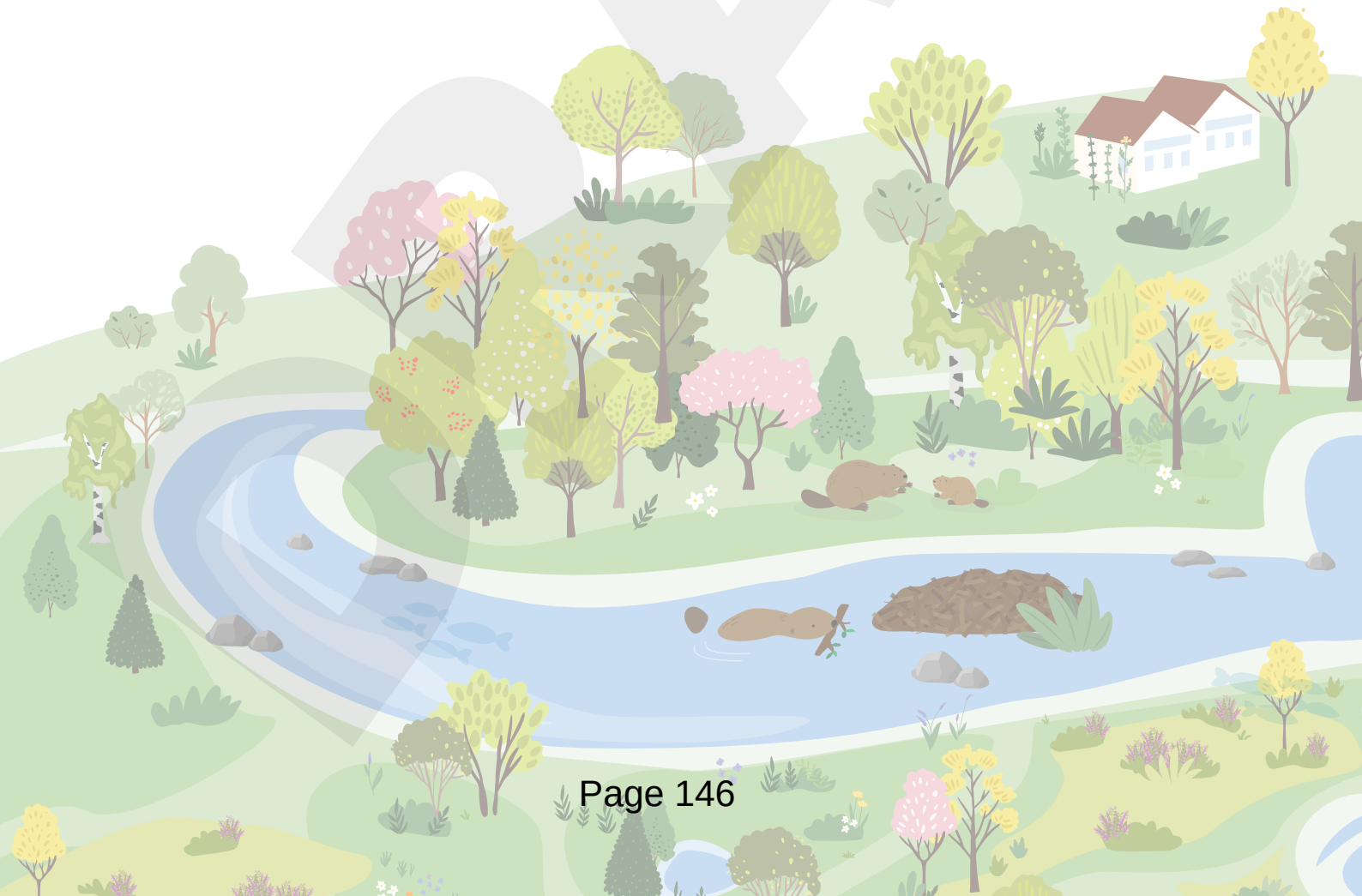
Priorities and activities

Priority 10 - Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions are the first option to address wider environmental issues, such as flooding, climate change and pollution.

Nature gives us what we need to survive. The priority is to use nature as the solution when responding to a range of environmental and social issues, so that we invest in nature rather than built infrastructure which in turn will help ensure a more abundant, diverse and connected natural environment. Nature-based solutions are actions which sustainably use nature to provide environmental, economic or societal benefits and ecosystem services, while also helping enhance or restore the natural assets and ecosystems.

Working with nature and natural processes and not against it, must become a key part of delivering on issues that widely affect communities in Dorset such as flooding, water quality, carbon storage and extreme temperatures.



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Nature recovery in action

Wessex Water has implemented nature-based solutions in Dorset, particularly in the Poole Harbour Catchment, to reduce levels of nitrate leaching into the groundwater to protect public water supplies. This work has focused on reducing agricultural runoff and improving water quality in the Poole Harbour area. Wessex Water worked with farmers to promote natural practices like planting buffer strips, encouraging the use of cover crops to reduce bare ground over the winter and providing advice to land managers on options available.

Through this approach they have collaboratively reduced nitrate leaching by over 60 tonnes of nitrogen in 2022-23, and since 2020 delivered over 80 hectares of habitat improvements.

Along the River Stour they are restoring natural riverbanks and floodplains which enhance the river's ability to manage floods while also creating habitats for fish, birds and other species. This has included the use of riparian buffers and wetlands to capture phosphorus rich soil runoff from entering the Stour and its tributaries. These wetlands and woodlands provide important habitats for wildlife, help reduce nutrient pollution, and help to manage flood risks by absorbing excess rainwater.



Leaky dam

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Businesses, Industry & Economy

Nature & Environment Sector

Communities & Individuals

Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Establish and maintain more native trees in towns and villages to improve air quality, provide shade from extreme heat, increase carbon storage, improve water quality and provide natural flood management. Increase tree canopy cover in all urban areas, especially areas that have the lowest tree equity scores	
Follow a natural flood management (NFM) approach to protect, restore and emulate the natural functions of catchments, floodplains, rivers and the coast	
Create or restore wet habitats in floodplains to help store flood water and catch nutrients and sediment before they enter rivers. These areas can also provide healthy food for livestock to graze during drier weather, and become havens for pollinators and other wildlife. Beavers can be part of the process of creating expanded wetland habitats	
Use farming practices that focus on soil health, structure and maximising carbon and water storage. Farming for soil health helps reduce runoff and slow the flow of water through the catchment to reduce flood risk and improve water quality. Healthy soils also sequester carbon to help address climate change and help food production by smoothing out the flood-drought fluctuations and extending the grazing/growing periods	
Use permeable materials if creating hard surfaces in urban areas, such as driveways, and limit use of sealed surfaces like concrete and artificial grass that water quickly runs over into drains. By redirecting water into natural soakaways, rather than the wastewater system, can help reduce flood risk and reduce the number of storm overflow discharges	
Use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in towns and villages, such as rain gardens, swales, street trees and ponds to slow and clean water, and provide wetland or boggy habitat. This can help reduce flood risk and reduce the number of storm overflow discharges	
Use rainwater harvesting to capture rainwater and use this to water plants in residential and community spaces	
Maintain and increase green social prescribing, supporting people to take part in nature-based activities that can help improve health and wellbeing	

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Potential activity
Enhance and create habitats to help mitigate climate change, natural habitats capture and store carbon. Peatland, broadleaved woodland and saltmarsh are examples of habitats that tend to be larger carbon stores, but many other habitat types provide some carbon storage, and a variety of habitats is needed for a functioning ecosystem
Create wetlands to provide final treatment of wastewater before this recycled water is safely returned back into the environment.
Create wetlands to treat discharges of untreated sewage from storm overflows before they are released into rivers and waterways
Enhance and create hedgerows that slow the flow of water across the landscape, which helps reduce flood risk and improve water quality by reducing the amount of sediment and pollution in rivers. Hedges are also a carbon store, as well as providing wildlife habitats and corridors
Include fire defendable lines, ponds and emergency service access routes within heathland to reduce wildfire risk, increase the ability to contain fires, and improve resilience to climate change
Increase tree, hedge and/or wood pasture on farms to provide shade for livestock from extreme heat and slow the flow of water to improve flood protection and water quality
Restore species-rich grassland to boost soil health, protect against erosion and store carbon
Use sustainable farming practices to produce healthy food and support initiatives to connect people with local sustainably produced food
Embed the importance of nature recovery across all organisations so that senior decision-makers champion nature and consider nature-based solutions as part of decision making



Priorities and activities

Priority 11 - Nature connection

More people are informed on nature recovery in Dorset and are actively doing something to make space for nature.

Nature recovery needs to be at the heart of every community, with collective action bringing the biggest gains. More people knowing, loving, appreciating and doing something for nature will lead to more nature positive behaviours. A thriving nature-based local economy can also help boost local employment and incomes. Each person, business, organisation, landowner, farmer, school, group is part of the solution to make nature more abundant, connected and resilient in Dorset. This strategy is the people of Dorset's strategy and provides the different priorities, activities and information needed to recover nature across the county. And in turn help strengthen the links between our natural environment, economy, jobs and health.

One way people can support nature recovery is through Nature Recovery Dorset, an initiative collectively created to help bring together and drive forward local action for nature. Nature Recovery Dorset celebrates what's already being done for nature, shows where there are opportunities to do more, and encourages collaboration.



Nature recovery in action

Planet Purbeck is a community-led organisation working to protect and enhance nature in Purbeck, by bringing communities together and ensuring nature recovery delivers benefits to improve people's everyday lives.

Working together with landowners, activity providers, community groups and charities, they've launched Purbeck Goes Wild to make sure every Purbeck child and young person is offered opportunities to get out and about in nature. From school gardening clubs and free school trips to nature hotspots, family outdoor activities and opportunities to help with practical nature conservation tasks.

Young people connecting more with nature may become ambassadors for protecting the natural environment or gain skills to progress with careers in conservation and outdoor sectors.



Image from the film Let's Go Wild

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Potential activity
Showcase and champion the huge range of activities already happening for nature recovery in Dorset, and celebrate the people involved to help inspire others
Continue and grow Dorset's strong history of partnership working. For example, farm clusters, catchment based approach, and landscape recovery projects. Use this strategy as a tool to help target collaborative efforts, working together across sectors by listening without judgement, sharing knowledge and pooling resources
Share advice to help develop and implement a land management plan, if one is not already in place. For example, for farmers, landowner, land managers, community groups, town and parish councils, schools
Support rural skills development and rural workers to strengthen the nature-based local economy. For example, business hubs, affordable housing tied to local forestry or agriculture, promoting sustainable tourism and linking with the outdoor activity sector
Host farmer or forester led events to learn more about sustainable practices
Include sustainable farming, sustainable forestry and land management and conservation courses in local college curriculum
Share successes and learning from trailblazing transformational landscape scale projects and enhance the collective efforts of farmers and landowners
Support local farmers, landowners and land managers in their asks to government regarding support for sustainable farming or forestry practices
Use public sector resources to carry out nature recovery projects as demonstrators (for example, nutrient mitigation or county farms), then champion the private sector to drive delivery
Increase training of greenspace maintenance contractors to include managing grassland and other habitats with nature recovery in mind, including training on the equipment required and where this is available for hire
Promote the opportunity for traditional livestock breed rearing and grazing to meet the demand for conservation grazing as part of habitat management

Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers

Businesses, Industry & Economy

Nature & Environment Sector

Communities & Individuals

Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Work with architects, builders and roofers to raise awareness of potential impacts of development on wildlife and the benefits of seeking ecological advice early in the design process	
Provide training to landscape architects and grounds maintenance teams on wildlife-friendly gardening practices	
Provide guidance to help developers consider sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) at an early stage of design and planning, and how these can provide multiple benefits for water quality and biodiversity	
Show how businesses can deliver nature recovery actions at different scales. For example, Sustainable Business Network, BCP Council Nature Pledge. Celebrate stories of businesses whose success is based on working in harmony with a healthy natural environment	
Collaborate with recording groups and citizen scientists to explore how they can help measure progress and promote opportunities for more people to get involved, from annual wildlife count days to regular wildlife monitoring groups	
Share information on what people can do to help wildlife at home. For example, Dorset Wildlife Trust's wildlife-friendly spaces award, BCP Council's Nature Pledge	
Support communities to understand and celebrate any changes happening through habitat restoration and why it is needed. For example, information signs on footpaths and near projects, volunteer days, and explaining the positives of having wilder areas that may seem 'untidy' to some	
Raise awareness of ways people can enjoy nature, while minimising pressures this can put on wildlife. For example, Dorset Dogs and The Countryside Code	
Make more space for nature nearby people's homes, especially in areas where it is estimated 30% or less of the population live within a 300m walk of nature	
Promote ways for people to connect with nature when using footpaths, national trails, rights of way and open access land	

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Potential activity
Continue the work of the Partnership Against Rural Crime to raise awareness of what a wildlife crime is and how to report it
Build on existing provision of nature related activities in nurseries, schools, colleges and youth clubs. For example, increase forest school for all students, assembly packs for eco clubs to deliver, trips to natural spaces and farms, on-site growing of food, plants and trees, resources for educators to embed nature recovery themes across all lessons/subjects, geo-caching
Continue and expand the variety of nature-related activities in communities across Dorset, giving more time for people to connect with nature or get involved in nature conservation. For example, community gardening, pond-dipping experiences, natural arts and crafts, mindfulness sessions, outdoor physical activities
Maintain and increase green social prescribing, supporting people to take part in nature-based activities that can help improve health and wellbeing, meet a diverse range of needs, and foster nature connectedness
Acquire long-term funding to support project development, capital investment and ongoing maintenance of interventions
Raise awareness of new funding for nature recovery activities and increase support to access funding where needed, for example, farm advisors, community fund finder
Provide a clear approach for monitoring and reporting, so everyone can understand what 'good' looks like for different habitat types and species, and how to report on their activities to help track progress
Maintain centralised mapping service where local people can view information about habitats, opportunities for nature recovery, and completed projects
Explore opportunities to deliver nature recovery projects in places with heritage assets or historical features, to benefit the natural and historic environment
Share opportunities for people to learn more about local geodiversity, how it supports the natural environment, what nature recovery activities are supported by different geology, and opportunities to conserve geology through volunteering

Priorities and activities

Priority 12 - Species abundance and diversity

Abundance and diversity of local species increases so that sustainable populations are reached and maintained, while invasive non-native species are controlled.

This priority is about giving all wildlife opportunities to thrive, by creating a network of diverse, naturally functioning and joined up grassland, woodland, wetland, heathland and coastal habitats across the county, supported by more nature-friendly land management practices across all the surrounding farmland, towns and villages. This will be achieved by combining potential activities listed under a number of the other nature recovery priorities.

Species abundance is how many individuals of a species are in an area, for example the number of pyramidal orchids in a 1m by 1m section of a meadow. Species richness is how many different species there are in an area, for example the other grasses, flowers and wildlife alongside the orchids. Together, more abundance and richness contribute to more species diversity. Rather than just aiming for high numbers, the focus of this priority is on species having big enough populations to be maintained over the long term to help the ecosystem function. Without enough overall wildlife (biomass) then there is a risk that food chains will collapse.

As well as increasing local species diversity, there is a need to reduce or remove invasive non-native species whose presence is a common threat to native wildlife and the habitats covered by the other priorities.

This priority focuses on supporting habitats and their species to be resilient to pests, disease, and ongoing changes in our climate, acknowledging that some species will reduce or move away, and some new species will arrive from other areas, attracted by the changed climatic conditions.

Some land management activities benefit some species more than others, as part of planning activities it is important to consider if the intended outcome is to increase overall species diversity or abundance, or to support a specific species.



Nature recovery in action

A project to control Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed was carried out in the River Axe catchment.

Himalayan balsam is considered problematic and invasive as it outcompetes native plants, provides poor soil stabilisation due to its shallow roots, can alter water flows on rivers, and spreads rapidly. It responds strongly to nutrient availability and therefore can be a problem near farmland and water courses where nutrient input is often higher.

Working with Natural England, the Dorset based European Conservation Action Network (EuCAN) volunteers worked alongside contractors over a 5-year period to tackle the invasive species problem on the main River Axe.

The giant hogweed was dealt with by contractors removing the flower and seed heads offsite in heavy-duty plastic sacks for disposal by incineration. The Japanese knotweed was tackled by contractors using one application of a glyphosate-based herbicide in September and the Himalayan balsam was removed through pulling, cutting, strimming, and brush cutting by both volunteers and contractors.

This work initially led to a reduction in Himalayan balsam, but, as soon as the funding stopped the problem returned. This example illustrates why it's important to prevent invasive non-native species at source, because efforts to control them can be expensive and are required long-term.



Volunteers clearing Himalayan Balsam

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Potential activity	
Create a network of naturally functioning diverse habitats across the county, supported by more nature-friendly land management practices across all the surrounding areas by delivering the activities listed under all the other priorities in this strategy	
Make simple changes across Dorset to help increase species abundance, such as herbal leys and diverse seed mixes on farms, encouraging natural regeneration of woodlands, and leaving wilder areas in parks and open spaces	
Maintain local geological sites in order to support geodiversity and species diversity	
Use integrated pest management on farms to reduce the amount of chemicals used and improve soil health. For example, beetle banks on arable farms provide habitat for beneficial insects that feed on crop pests. Similarly, increasing species diversity in pasture and using rotational livestock grazing can support dung beetles, which help with parasite control. This can also reduce the need for parasite treatments that can harm bats, invertebrates and other species	
Use wildlife-friendly gardening practices. For example, peat-free compost, hedgehog house, not using chemicals or slug pellets	
Stop introduction or spread of invasive non-native species by increasing understanding of the risks and how they spread	
Use local and native species when creating new spaces for nature as part of building development, but also consider new species where these provide a similar ecological function and are suited to the built environment	
Raise awareness of which invasive or near-invasive species to avoid planting in gardens or community projects	
Undertake targeted and sustained control of non-native and invasive plants and animals, for example, rhododendron, Himalayan balsam, snowberry, sour fig, cotoneaster, Japanese rose, giant hogweed, water fern and mink. Use resources from the non-native species secretariat for further information and examples	

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Potential activity	
Follow guidance and regulations set by the Animal and Plant Health Agency	
Coordinate landscape scale management of sustainable deer populations to improve the ecological condition of semi-natural habitats, supporting the natural regeneration of trees, woody shrubs and ground flora, and to protect agricultural crops. Control muntjac deer (as an invasive species). Within both Wareham and Purbeck focus management actions upon sika deer populations	
Monitor tree stocks for pests and disease, and where impacts are high, adapt woodland management plans and practices to respond. Refer to Forest Research for further information	
Coordinate shared approach to respond to ash dieback across land ownership boundaries	
If plants or trees are lost to disease, re-plant with a more resistant and diverse species mix but make sure these perform similar or enhanced ecological functions and are native if possible	
Explore options for landscape scale management of grey squirrel populations and deliver this to improve ecological condition of woodlands and reduce pressures on other animals, such as mammals and birds. Include an evaluation of the feasibility for pine marten reintroduction	
Use badger surveillance and vaccination as part of the new TB eradication strategy	

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Potential activity	
Stop the spread of common wall lizard into new areas, particularly heathland. Raise awareness of how to identify the species and what people should do if found. Carry out surveys of new or spreading populations, to control before they become established	
Control Alpine newt, survey populations and stop their spread into new areas. Raise awareness of what people should do if they spot them and how to avoid accidentally helping them spread	
Raise awareness of how to quickly identify areas with newly colonised sour fig and rapidly control and remove the species to prevent it spreading	
When managing and restoring habitats, be aware that climate change may make conditions suitable for different species, and that may have knock-on impacts on other species and processes in complex and dynamic ecosystems	
Use native plant and tree species to support the local food web and wildlife, but also support the use of new species and varieties where these enhance ecological function and resilience to pests, diseases, climate change and extreme weather	
Ensure diversity in age, species and structure of the habitat to help species adapt to climate-related pressures and/or disperse to new areas	
Increase connectivity between habitats to enable species to move in response to new climate pressures	
Raise awareness of species that might arrive in Dorset due to climate change or reintroduction projects to help people recognise them, understand why they have arrived and the potential benefits they might bring	
On former minerals and waste sites, restoration should prioritise nature recovery in accordance with planning authorities. Explore options to encourage longer-term management beyond the aftercare period	

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Priorities and activities

Priority 13 - Priority species

Dorset's priority species needing bespoke conservation action are supported and sustained.

Making more space for nature across the landscape will lead to an increase in the abundance and diversity of wildlife across Dorset. By delivering activities under the other nature recovery priorities, we expect to see increases in populations of species associated with specific habitats, such as woodlark benefiting from the heathland priority. However, some species need bespoke action to enable their numbers to recover, increase and be sustained.

To identify which species should be on this priority list, a group was formed with experts representing amphibians and reptiles, birds, fish, fungi, invertebrates, lichens, mammals and plants.

Following a process set by Defra, the group:

- created a longlist of almost 1,000 species that are characteristic of Dorset, at high risk of extinction or otherwise locally significant
- selected 55 priority species from the longlist by identifying species requiring bespoke activities, and considering factors such as urgency, feasibility, climate change and existing work

The Species Recovery supporting document explains the methodology, who was involved, and which species were selected for the long list. While the priority list focuses on species requiring bespoke action, the longlist is a useful tool for planning nature recovery projects. The longlist species are grouped into habitat-based assemblages, each with their own guide explaining which species have similar habitat requirements and the pressures they face. These guides provide useful information to understand how activities under other priorities in this strategy will help species. For example, the potential activities under Priority 5 – Coastal can support the assemblage 'species of soft rock and slumping cliffs'.
This is the first time this approach has been taken for such a large range of important species in the county, bringing together key information on species requirements to inform habitat management and restoration.

The priority species are listed on the following pages, there are 74 individual species but some have been grouped into assemblages where they require the same bespoke activities to reduce the list to 55. The potential activities for each species can be found in the Species Recovery supporting document.

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For the first section of the priority list the ambition is to reverse declines, for the second section of the list the ambition is to explore the potential for conservation translocation. It may not be possible to recover or reintroduce some of the priority species within the lifetime of the local nature recovery strategy, instead the potential activities for some species focus on better understanding evidence, risks, local views and deliverability.



Atlantic puffin



Barn owl



Crane


Grey partridge



Common tern



Little tern


Sandwich tern



Ringed plover



Stone-curlew



Swift


Hazel dormouse


Water vole


Grey long-eared bat

Swarming bat assemblage



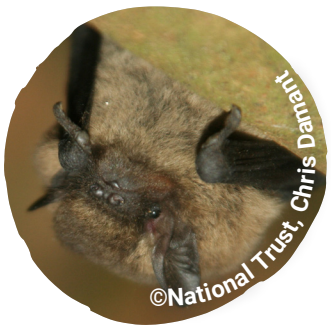
Alcathoe



Bechstein's


Brandt's


Brown long-eared



Common pipistrelle



Daubenton's



Natterer's


Serotine


Western barbastelle


Whiskered



Atlantic salmon



European eel


Sea lamprey



White-clawed crayfish



Potter flower bee



Long-horned bee



Dingy mocha



Barberry carpet moth

Micromoths of limestone cliffs assemblage



Cliff plume



Samphire knot-horn


Duke of Burgundy



Lulworth skipper



Marsh fritillary



Richardson's case-bearer

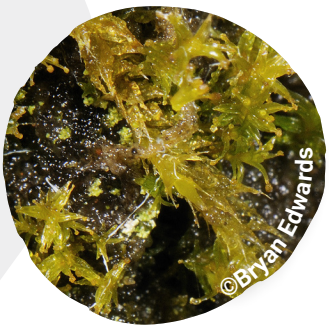


Blackwort



Chalk threadwort


Stinking goosefoot



Thatch-moss



Dwarf eelgrass



Eelgrass

Priority species for conservation translocation

Conservation translocations are the deliberate movement and release of plants, animals or fungi into the wild for conservation purposes. When carefully planned and managed, this can enrich the natural environment and can often provide wider benefits for people.

The priority species list includes several species which are proposed for conservation translocation, or population enhancement for species already subject to translocation or reintroduction in England. Some species have been proposed because suitable habitat is now being restored, others have been included because of their significant role in maintaining habitats and ecosystems. Potential activities for many of these species focus on better understanding evidence, risks, local views and deliverability. These are the steps needed towards the ambition for their reintroduction in future, rather than steps to complete a successful translocation within the lifetime of the local nature recovery strategy.

Find out more about conservation translocations and their impacts in the Species Recovery supporting document, along with the potential activities for the priority species proposed for conservation translocation listed below.



Black grouse



Corncrake



Red-backed shrike



Red-billed chough



White stork



Eurasian beaver



European bison



Pine marten

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Natterjack toad



Black-backed meadow ant


Narrow headed ant



Shrill carder bee



Ladybird spider


Orange-spotted emerald



Pearl-bordered fritillary



Speckled footman

Micro-moths of Dyer's greenweed assemblage



Greenwood buff or flat-body



Greenweed dot or pigmy



Greenweed piercer



Greenweed Smith



Laburnum leaf-miner



Large gold case-bearer


Heath tiger beetle



Wart-biter



Black poplar


Deptford pink


Elm species


Ivy-leaved bellflower


Juniper



Pheasant's-eye



Wild asparagus

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Dorset's nature recovery maps

Dorset's nature recovery maps are tools that can be used to identify opportunities and guide nature recovery activities in the county based on shared priorities agreed by local people and organisations.

A collection of layers make up Dorset's nature recovery maps. Three layers form part of the local nature recovery strategy, together these are called the Local Habitat Map.

The Local Habitat Map shows:

Dorset's nature areas of national importance

Dorset's nature areas of national importance layer combines all the sites that are currently recognised and protected within the land-use planning system for their biodiversity value.

It includes:

- national conservation sites
  - » Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - » Ramsar (wetland of international importance)
  - » National Nature Reserve (NNR)
  - » Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - » Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- irreplaceable habitat
- Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)

Defra calls this layer "areas of particular Importance for biodiversity (APIB)".



Thorncombe Wood pony

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Dorset's high opportunity nature areas

Dorset's high opportunity nature areas are where efforts should be targeted to meet Dorset's nature recovery priorities and will help guide where funding is targeted. It was created from:

- farmers, landowners, land managers and projects putting forward their land where they are planning to do something to help nature recovery
- modelling of opportunities to expand and connect the largest areas of semi-natural habitat (wetland, heathland, grassland, woodland and coastal habitats) in Dorset
- modelling of opportunities to deliver wider environmental benefits through habitat creation or enhancement, for example, air and water quality benefits
- cutting out the highest-grade agricultural land, dense housing areas, and the nature areas of national importance layer

The high opportunity nature areas do not overlap with the nature areas of national importance. This is because lots of the nature areas of national importance already have statutory management plans that include nature recovery activities. The ambition is to join up the existing nature areas of national importance with the high opportunity nature areas, to grow the nature recovery network.

Defra calls this layer "areas that could become of importance for biodiversity (ACB)".

Dorset's potential activities

The potential activities layer suggests what activities to do where, to help achieve the nature recovery priorities.

The layer shows primary and secondary activities. Primary activities suggest what type of habitat creation or enhancement could be most beneficial in an area. This is based on the data that created the high opportunity nature areas and takes into account that some habitat types are particularly scarce in Dorset.

Secondary activities are also provided to reflect that it may often be beneficial to consider a mix of habitat types or nature recovery activities as part of a land management plan.

The primary and secondary activities are a guide, not a prescription. Site-specific assessments and management plans would confirm what would work best in an area. Additional advice on ecology, planning requirements, historic environment, flooding and funding options may be needed to deliver the activity suggested. There are lots of organisations and partnerships in Dorset that can help with this. More information on the advice and permissions that may be required when planning nature recovery activities is available in the Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps.

The strategy does not actively seek to map potential activities in nature areas of national importance because these have their own management plans and legal frameworks. So activities are mostly mapped in the high opportunity nature areas, with a few exceptions where potential activities are mapped for irreplaceable habitat and some specific restoration projects.

Defra calls this layer "potential measures (PM)".



Using the mapped and written activities together

The potential activities layer gives a broad suggestion of primary and secondary activities, but this could involve doing many different things that are not all mapped. So, this layer must be used alongside the potential activities listed under the 13 local nature recovery strategy priorities in the written part of the strategy.

For example, if you are looking at the potential activities layer and the primary activity is "create or enhance woodland habitat", you should read the potential activities listed under priority 2 in the strategy.

There are also many potential activities that need to be delivered right across the county, or cannot be shown spatially, and so are not mapped.

For example:

- wildlife-friendly gardening and urban greening
- sustainable farming practices
- feasibility studies to identify suitable locations for species recovery
- enhancing geodiversity as part of nature recovery activities

It is therefore essential that the Local Habitat Map and written part of the strategy are used together.

Along the coast, the Local Habitat Map extends to the mean low water line, except where the council boundary extends beyond this, such as Poole Harbour. Dorset's nature areas of national importance includes some marine sites beyond this boundary because potential activities on the land can have a positive effect on them. However, it is beyond the scope of this strategy to map high opportunity nature areas and potential activities in marine areas.

Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps

Find out more about how to use the Local Habitat Map and how we produced each layer in the Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps.

The guide also explains more about the additional map layers that are available as part of Dorset's nature recovery maps. These additional layers do not form part of the local nature recovery strategy, they are extra tools that may provide helpful information on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery.

View Dorset's nature recovery maps

Achieving nature recovery

The maps visualise the important nature areas in Dorset, and guide where there is opportunity to deliver the potential activities. The data behind the maps can help us understand the scale of habitat creation, restoration and nature-friendly land management needed to achieve our shared vision for nature recovery in Dorset and contribute to the 30by30 target.

The figures below show how much of Dorset is currently covered by semi-natural habitat and protected nature areas. The figures also indicate how much more of Dorset could be contributing to nature recovery over the next 10 years, as everyone delivers the potential activities as part of our joint mission.

Nature in Dorset now

The current picture based on the best available data:

- the nature areas of national importance layer cover 16.1% of Dorset, these are sites protected within the land-use planning system for their biodiversity value
- the habitat and ecological network layers show, semi-natural habtiat covers 19.3% of Dorset, made up of the following broad habitat classes:
  - unimproved and semi-improved grassland covers 3.3% of Dorset
  - broadleaved and mixed woodland covers 10.4%
  - heathland covers 2.2%
  - rivers and other water bodies cover 1.7%
  - wetland covers 0.4%
  - coastal covers 1.3%
- large semi-natural habitat areas, over 100 hectares, cover 9.7%

Nature recovery in Dorset in the next 10 years

A guide to what we can achieve based on implementing the priorities and activities in the high opportunity nature areas:

- the high opportunity nature areas layer covers 45.1% of Dorset:
- if you combine the high opportunity nature areas with the nature areas of national importance, this covers 61.2% of Dorset, indicating how the nature recovery network could grow

The measuring success section gives an overview of how progress towards nature recovery could be tracked as activities happen on the ground.

Delivery and funding

Funding to deliver the 30by30 nature recovery target in Dorset will require people to work together, with opportunities such as biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation and Environmental Land Management schemes, as well as through local initiatives across Dorset. This section summarises different ways to fund and support the delivery of nature recovery, based on information available at the time of writing the strategy. Updated information may be available on the Nature Recovery Dorset website.

Nature Recovery Dorset

Nature Recovery Dorset is a countywide initiative that has been born out of working with so many individuals across such a wide range of sectors. It celebrates and supports the individuals, farmers, landowners, communities and organisations who are helping restore nature in Dorset. There's no cost to join the Nature Recovery Dorset network - just a shared desire to make more space for nature in Dorset.

By itself a strategy achieves nothing if it does not lead to effective action. To help promote a seamless transition from strategy preparation to delivery, the Nature Recovery Dorset network brings together the variety of nature recovery activities happening across the county.



Volunteers on Canford Heath

Housing and green infrastructure



Biodiversity net gain

Biodiversity net gain is a legal obligation, introduced in February 2024, that requires new developments to leave biodiversity in a measurably (10%) better state than before. Simply put this means developers must either create or enhance habitats on-site or, if that is not possible, purchase off-site biodiversity units to improve habitats elsewhere. The goal of biodiversity net gain is to ensure that development projects contribute positively to the environment by boosting wildlife habitats and overall biodiversity. Both BCP Council and Dorset Council planning authorities have guidance in place.

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy maps high opportunity nature areas for habitat creation, connecting of existing ecosystems, and maximising of environmental benefits. The high opportunity nature areas can guide on-site biodiversity net gain by influencing the habitats considered as part of site design. They also guide off-site biodiversity net gain by agreeing evidence-based locations to expand and connect existing habitat. This can influence the 'strategic significance' multiplier in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric that is used to calculate biodiversity net gain.

This mechanism means that there is an incentive for developers to align with the high opportunity nature areas when choosing the location of off-site biodiversity net gain units. Understanding this link is crucial for developers, landowners, planning authorities, and ecologists involved in biodiversity net gain delivery. If you create or improve the habitat mapped as the potential activity in a high opportunity nature area, you might be able to earn 1.15 times more biodiversity units, thanks to the strategic significance multiplier.

Find out more on how to use Dorset's local nature recovery strategy to achieve biodiversity net gain.

Environment mitigation delivery for development

Funding is made available through development contributions to mitigate the adverse impacts of housing and other development on internationally important habitats and species. This funding is spent to reduce impacts such as nutrient levels, air quality and recreational disturbance.

The focus is primarily on reducing negative impacts or restoring or recreating habitats that have been lost, but often mitigation activities can also be designed to contribute to nature recovery. For example, a suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) provides nature areas for people to enjoy as an alternative to sensitive habitats like heathlands, although their primary purpose is recreation, they can be managed using nature-friendly practices to also deliver for nature recovery. Similarly, managing land to help reduce nitrate inputs to rivers will often involve creating wildlife habitat that can boost biodiversity as well as delivering ecosystem services.

Find out more about Environment Mitigation delivery.

Habitat compensation and restoration is also delivered as part of developing flood and coastal defences, this is coordinated through the Environment Agency's Habitat Compensation and Restoration programme.

Sustainable farming and forestry

Dorset farmers and foresters incorporating sustainable food and timber production practices, alongside nature recovery, is the key to success in delivering the 30by30 target in Dorset. Many Dorset farmers and foresters are involved in long-term stewardship of our natural environment, alongside food production and other rural businesses. Several farmer clusters are running in Dorset, these are groups led by farmers who work together to collectively deliver greater benefits for nature across the farmed landscape.

Farmers working individually or in clusters have several ways to help deliver nature recovery and the farming sector is currently going through changes to payments available for different environmental actions, known as the Agricultural Transition.

Farmers visit Dorset Council on Back British Farming day



Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) are a set of government schemes designed to reward and provide financial incentives to farmers and landowners who deliver environmental benefits through nature friendly practices on their land. Find out the latest schemes and government funding for farmers, growers and land managers.

Local advice and support to consider wildlife and the environment as part of land management is also available to farmers, land managers and landowners from a range of organisations. A few examples include: Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West, Dorset Wildlife Trust, The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Forestry Commission, Catchment Sensitive Farming (Natural England), Wessex Water.

In parts of Dorset, the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme provides funding and advice to farmers and land managers for projects that support nature recovery, or nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. FiPL is available in the Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Similarly, Big Chalk partnership and funding is available in parts of Dorset across the chalk and limestone landscapes.

The local nature recovery strategy and maps can provide evidence to support scheme or project plans and funding applications.

Community and individual projects

In Dorset, communities and individuals play a crucial role in delivering nature recovery by working together to create, improve, restore and protect local nature areas. Community-led initiatives, such as planting native trees, creating wildflower meadows, or restoring ponds, can all contribute to improving habitats for wildlife.

Dorset Wildlife Trust, a partner in the local nature recovery strategy, has developed new online resources to help more people take action for nature as an individual or community. As part of this, case studies have been prepared to tell community stories and inspire more people to be part of nature's recovery. These include a roadside verge garden, churchyard, library garden, GP Practice, swift group, and partnership between a town council and its 'In Bloom' group.

Adam Practice Garden, Hamworthy



Advice is also available to individuals and environmental groups from a range of organisations like, National Trust, Parks Foundation, RSPB, Dorset Council, BCP Council and National Education Nature Park. And Volunteer Centre Dorset have a range of volunteering opportunities, including gardening, nature conservation and outdoor activities.

Nature recovery in action

Patients of The Adam Practice in Hamworthy have collaborated with Dorset Wildlife Trust and Poole Men's Shed to plant a raised bed with sensory plants and herbs to encourage wildlife. Together they have also built bird boxes and planted areas around the GP practice with sunflowers, shrubs and pollinator-friendly herbs.

Businesses funding and delivering projects

Businesses in Dorset are key to delivering nature recovery, from making space for nature on their own premises to helping fund nature recovery projects across the county.

Litter Free Dorset has been working closely with businesses across Dorset to inspire them to take action for nature. Through the Sustainable Business Network, businesses have been supported to become more informed about nature recovery and the simple steps they can take to get involved. From installing pollinator-friendly hanging baskets and bug hotels to creating wildlife-friendly outdoor seating areas, these efforts have supported local biodiversity and shown that every business can make a difference for nature. A 'Nature Recovery' category was introduced to the Sustainable Business Award, with 20 practical actions for businesses to adopt—whether they have large green spaces or limited outdoor areas. This category celebrates businesses that are taking meaningful steps to support nature. Over 50 businesses have already completed their nature recovery actions, proving that no matter the size or sector, every business can contribute to protecting and restoring Dorset's natural environment.

Projects for Nature is a collaborative example of green finance bringing businesses together alongside Defra and other expert environmental bodies to bridge the funding gap and accelerate the finance needed to deliver nature recovery.

Nature recovery actions taken by Sustainable Business Award winners





New green finance and funding

A range of funding streams are available or emerging to deliver nature recovery. A blended green finance approach might include private investment through nature or carbon markets, business investment as part of corporate social responsibility, and grant funding from government or charitable organisations.

For projects wishing to market the climate benefit of habitat restoration, the Woodland Carbon Code and the Peatland Code are useful quality assurance standards.

Throughout the implementation of Dorset's local nature recovery strategy, information on funding opportunities and potential delivery partners will be added to the Nature Recovery Dorset webpages.

Biodiversity duty

The biodiversity duty refers to the legal or ethical obligation placed on public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This duty requires authorities to consider the impacts of their actions on ecosystems and wildlife, regularly report on action and progress and ensure sustainable practices that conserve natural habitats are in place.

Public authorities can use the local nature recovery strategy to inform how they manage land and make relevant regulatory decisions.



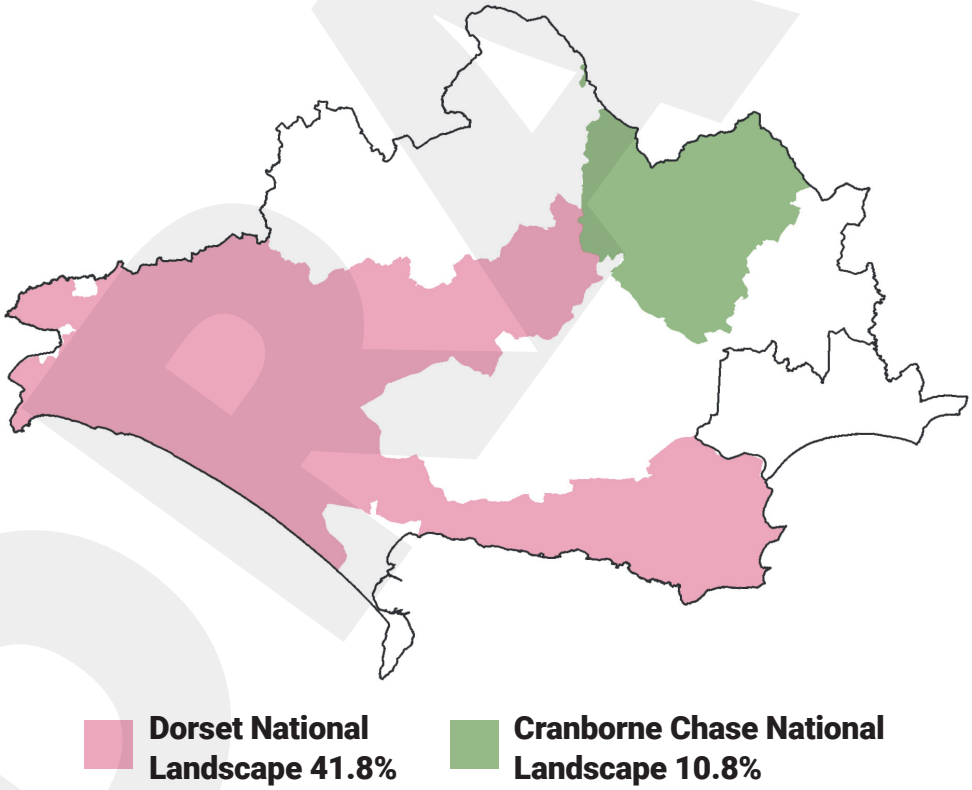
Arable reversion in the Tadnoll Brook Catchment

Related plans and strategies

In agreeing Dorset's priorities and activities, relevant spatial plans and strategies have been looked at to align this strategy with other relevant documents in the county. Find out more about other Policies, Strategies and Plans relating to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in the supporting document, including flood risk management and the BCP Green Infrastructure strategy.

The government intends for local nature recovery strategies to inform the planning process. Local planning authorities must take account of local nature recovery strategies to ensure nature recovery requirements are properly reflected in the planning system. There are some similarities between what the local nature recovery strategy will provide and what the local plans must achieve. Find out more about how the local plans and the local nature recovery strategy work together.

The local nature recovery strategy also relates to the management plans and nature recovery targets of both Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape, which together cover 52% of Dorset as shown in the map.



Cranborne Chase National Landscape is designated as an International Dark Sky Reserve, helping bats, birds, moths and other nocturnal creatures to thrive.

The local nature recovery strategy will also help identify key opportunities to work together with neighbouring counties in delivering nature recovery activities on/near the county boundaries.

Brit catchment landscape



Landscape scale projects

Landscape scale projects focus on large areas (over 500 hectares) by managing and conserving natural resources across big geographical areas, with diverse ecosystems, habitats, and land uses. For example, a project might work to restore wetlands, plant more woodland in degraded areas, and connect wildlife corridors, while engaging local communities, foresters and landowners in more sustainable farming practices. By working at a landscape scale, nature can recover more effectively by ensuring that wildlife can thrive across larger areas and ecosystems can function more naturally. These large scale projects aim to address environmental challenges holistically, considering ecological, social, and economic factors to create sustainable solutions.

Landscape scale projects are often collaborative, involving partnerships between environmental organisations, private landowners, sustainable farming and forestry practices and local communities all working together with a common goal of nature recovery as well as addressing issues such as climate change, flood management, and soil health. Landscape projects that are currently in development or are being proposed can be seen in the 'land manager and project proposals' layer on Dorset's nature recovery maps.

Nature recovery in action

West Dorset Wilding is the organisation delivering the Brit catchment recovery project, it is a landowner and farmer-led charity taking action to restore ecosystems and increase nature in West Dorset through rewilding and regenerative agriculture.

Measuring success of nature recovery

The Defra Secretary of State will instruct responsible authorities to review and republish their local nature recovery strategies every 3 to 10 years. These reviews should show what nature recovery activities for Dorset have been done since the strategy was last published, and map locations where they have or are expected to bring about significant or lasting positive change. Further guidance from Defra is expected to enable us to carry out this measurement , including how we might access Dorset data from the national process for counting land that contributes towards 30by30.

As well as recognising nature recovery activities completed, initial measurement streams have been identified that could help measure Dorset's success in delivering nature recovery. These are based on the many existing monitoring activities already taking place, whether required for planning applications, designated site monitoring, baseline surveys for a farm, cluster, site or project, or voluntary monitoring groups. These can be broadly split as habitat, species, or enabling measures.

Habitat measures

- number, extent and condition of Dorset's designated sites
- data from monitoring projects and initiatives, for example, Dorset Heaths Partnership Monitoring, Water Guardians, Purbeck Natural History Forum
- biodiversity net gain, including the biodiversity gain site register
- water quality and nutrient levels
- national forest inventory

Most habitats are very slow to change and, despite restoration, may not be able to be classed as priority habitats for many years. Therefore, measuring success should also use species measures. Species change occurs more quickly and assessing indicator and priority species, along with other things, can be very useful for checking habitat restoration is going in the right direction.

Species measures

Existing citizen science surveys with good participation in Dorset can give an indicator of species abundance. The Big Garden Birdwatch hosted by RSPB and the Big Butterfly Count hosted by Butterfly Conservation have agreed to share Dorset data to help measure nature recovery. Other citizen science surveys will be investigated so the abundance of other taxonomic groups can be measured, and these surveys promoted to encourage participation across Dorset.

More specific surveys to monitor the priority species will help to measure success against priority 13, although data may not be publicly accessible for protected species. Additionally, indicator species surveys can support the habitat measures and inform habitat condition. Communicating what these indicator species are for different habitats and how to identify them could enable more people to spot and record signs of nature recovery.

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Enabling measures

The Nature Recovery Dorset network and peer-to-peer learning, such as video case studies and social media, will give an indication of how many people are engaged with nature recovery in Dorset. Digital resources can inspire others to take action for nature and signpost to information such as ideas for activities and funding mechanisms. Monitoring of activities which deliver the priorities will show how each priority is being delivered.

The submissions from the farmers and landowners for their land to be included in the high opportunity nature areas provides information on the different priorities they will help to achieve.

At a national level, Defra and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) have been asked to consider ways to improve the sharing of information on the actions farmers are taking for nature recovery through ELMs, to showcase their contribution to the nature recovery priorities and the 30by30 target.

Nature recovery in action

Sophie Alexander runs Hemsworth Farm near Witchampton, a 500 hectare organic arable and dairy farm with a strong focus on soil health, biodiversity, and regenerative practices.

Hemsworth Farm collaborated on the Biodiversity Monitoring 24/7 Project, testing different digital technologies to monitor the amount and variety of wildlife on the farm. This innovative project shows how digital monitoring can be used along with in-person biodiversity surveys, to help farmers make informed land management decisions to benefit both wildlife and food production.

Dorset Environmental Records Centre

The Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) is an organisation dedicated to collecting, managing, and sharing information about the county's wildlife, habitats, and geological features. They work to support biodiversity conservation and environmental decision-making. They maintain a comprehensive database of species records and habitat data, including lots of records submitted by local recording groups and citizen scientists. DERC play a crucial role in monitoring Dorset's natural heritage and providing insights for ecological research, land management, and planning initiatives.

DERC are essential in the measuring of nature recovery and showing the direction of travel towards achieving our 30by30 target. Sending in survey data and utilising DERC's services will be key in bringing together all the existing monitoring work being undertaken. This will be explored further during the implementation of the local nature recovery strategy.

Sophie at Hemsworth Farm



©Sophie Alexander

Supporting documents

Visit the supporting documents page to find the following:

- Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation and Engagement Report
- Pressures on Nature in Dorset and Opportunities for Recovery
- Species recovery supporting document
- Guide to the Dorset Nature Recovery Maps
- Policies, Strategies and Plans relating to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Data sources

Approximate percentages of land cover in Dorset

Percentages shown on page 25 come from a land cover map created in 2018 using local data and satellite imagery. The data is indicative, not definitive, but provides a useful indication of roughly how different habitat types and land uses cover Dorset. Please see the Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps for further information on how the map was created and data used.

Census area and garden coverage

The map on page 26 shows all the census output areas in Dorset, these are areas with similar numbers of people and houses used for national statistics. The areas are shown in different shades of green based on how much of the area is covered by gardens, using data held by Dorset Council garden waste team, and BCP Council's green infrastructure strategy. The map is not definitive but gives an indication of the coverage of residential gardens across Dorset.

Declines in Dorset's semi-natural habitats from 1930 to 2015

Information on page 28 is taken from:

- Trends in natural capital, ecosystem services and economic development in Dorset
- Mapping to inform conservation: A case study of changes in semi-natural habitats and their connectivity over 70 years
- Natural Value Report
- History of the heaths
- Dorset Management Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

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Useful terms

Biodiversity refers to the variety and amount of all life on Earth, this includes plants, animals, bacteria and fungi. For our planet to stay healthy we need a large variety of plants and animals.

Increasing biodiversity is a key aim of nature recovery, as well as restoring natural processes and functioning ecosystems. This means not just having pockets of nature-rich areas around the county, but having thriving natural habitats and ecosystems that support both people and wildlife.

Citizen science is when members of the public get involved in collecting and analysing data relating to the natural world, often as part of collaborative research projects with professional scientists.

Climate emergency refers to a declaration acknowledging the urgent need to act on the causes and impacts of climate change and prevent irreversible environmental damage.

An **ecological network** is a system of interacting species within an ecosystem that are connected by various relationships. For nature recovery, connected nature areas are more valuable to the natural environment than individual, fragmented parts.

Ecosystems are the interactions between a community of plants, animals plants, animals, bacteria and other organisms that live in an area, and their interaction with the non-living components of that place, like the climate, soil and water.

People and wildlife are all part of ecosystems, and small changes from human activity can disrupt the whole ecosystem.

Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans derive from natural ecosystems, such as clean air, water, food, climate regulation, and recreation.

Food chains show how plants and animals get their energy, with arrows showing the flow of energy between each living thing that eats the other. Food chains usually start with organisms, like green plants, that produce their own food, followed by animals or organisms that only eat plants, then predator animals that eat other animals are at the top of the chain.

Fragmentation is when habitats are broken up into smaller, isolated patches, which can make species movement difficult, reduce biodiversity, and be hard for nature to recover.

Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them.

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Habitats are where plants, animals, fungi and other organisms live. Habitats have the resources and conditions that a species needs, for example food, temperature, light and soils. Some individual species have very specific requirements, others can exist or even thrive in a range of different habitats. Broad habitat types, such as rivers and mixed woodland, are categories used to describe places with certain characteristics made up of vegetation and wildlife. **Semi-natural habitats** are those that have been changed in some ways by human activity, but still retain much of their biodiversity and natural processes.

A **layer** is a set of information that is 'layered' over a map to allow us to view the information geographically, for example, county boundaries. Multiple layers can be stacked on top of each other and coloured differently to view different sets of information at once and see how they interact.

Natural capital refers to the natural assets, like soil, water, and biodiversity, which are essential for supporting ecosystems and driving nature recovery efforts.

Nature-based solutions are actions which sustainably use nature to provide environmental or societal benefits and ecosystem services, while also helping enhance or restore the natural assets and ecosystems.

Nature emergency refers to a declaration acknowledging the urgent need to restore and protect ecosystems to halt the decline in wildlife and natural habitats.

The climate and nature emergencies are closely linked. Climate change is accelerating the decline of nature while the loss of natural habitats makes it harder to combat climate change. Both emergencies have been caused by human activity, such as releasing emissions, damaging habitats, and using too many natural resources.

A **nature network** is an ecological network that also delivers ecosystem services for people. The **Nature Recovery Network** is a growing national network of wildlife-rich places to increase and restore nature in England.

National landscapes are designated areas protected for the benefit of the nation and local people and wildlife. Dorset is covered by 2 national landscapes: Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Non-native species are animals and plants that have arrived in the UK from abroad through trade or accidental transport on planes and ships. Many are harmless, but **invasive non-native species** are those that spread and outcompete native species, threatening habitats and ecosystems.

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Resilience in nature refers to the ability of ecosystems to withstand and recover from disturbances, such as extreme weather, pollution, or human activities.

Species are plants, animals, fungi and single-celled organisms that have similar characteristics and can reproduce. Similar species can be grouped into sub-groups called taxa. For example, humans, hedgehogs and horses are all different species but can be grouped together within the taxon of mammals.

Sustainable means being able to continue doing something for a long period of time, with little or no damage to the environment. Using nature's limited resources sustainably is about meeting our current needs without harming wildlife or preventing future generations from meeting their needs.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) control surface water run off close to where it falls, combining a mixture of built and nature-based techniques to mimic natural drainage as closely as possible, and accounting for the predicted impacts of climate change. The type of system that would be appropriate will vary from small scale interventions such as permeable paving and soakaways that can be used in very small developments to larger integrated schemes in major developments



Strategy coordinated and edited by the core local nature recovery strategy team:

Bridget Betts, Dorset Council
Martin Whitchurch, BCP Council
Ian Alexander, Natural England
Amy Smith, Dorset Council
Jemma Reddaway, Dorset Council

Designed by Alison Bartlett, Dorset Council

December 2025

Appendix 3: Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations for the Dorset local nature recovery strategy Dec 2025.

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	major positive impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	neutral
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Not appliccable
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	

No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Dorset local nature recovery strategy

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

strategy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

Local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) present a system of spatial management for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Environment Act 2021. Each LNRS must:

i. Agree priorities for nature's recovery
ii. Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
iii. Map specific proposals and potential activities for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals

Dorset local nature recovery strategy provides a 10-year framework to help everyone work together towards a shared vision for nature recovery in Dorset.

Dorset's natural environment is one of our greatest assets, but over time it has been weakened. This strategy marks a turning point - an end to the decline and a focus on recovery.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been developed with consideration for equality, diversity and inclusion. The strategy aims to benefit all communities by improving access to nature, enhancing environmental quality, and supporting health and wellbeing. Through public consultation and stakeholder engagement, efforts have been made to ensure that the strategy reflects a wide range of views and does not disproportionately impact any protected groups. The strategy promotes inclusive participation in nature recovery and seeks to address barriers to engagement, particularly for underrepresented or disadvantaged communities.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy draws on several key sources of data and evidence across the DC and BCP council areas:

- **Public consultation feedback** from residents, stakeholders, and community groups, which helps identify potential impacts on different population groups.
- **Health data** from public health Dorset in relation of lack of access to nature across Dorset data.
- **Engagement with equality groups and statutory consultees**, including Natural England and BCP Council, to ensure inclusive representation.
- **Policy and strategy alignment**, including Dorset Council's and BCP Council Climate and Ecology Strategy and national guidance on Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

7. What did this tell you?

- User experience was sometimes not as good as it could be as the strategy is long, maps are complex, and it was unclear how to make relevant to me / my organisation
- People wanted more opportunities to get involved and guidance on doing the activities.
- Support and input came from a range of different stakeholders including farmers, landowners, businesses etc
- That 'meaningful and sustained stakeholder engagement' would be critical to the success of the Dorset LNRS – delivery of the strategy needs to start straight away to keep those people engaged.
- Nature recovery can deliver benefits for wildlife and people
- Access to nature is also important for lots of people, but this must be in appropriate areas / balanced with landowner views about access
- Who is most and least likely to benefit from nature recovery efforts, based on geographic, socio-economic, and demographic factors.
- Barriers to access and engagement with nature, especially for groups such as disabled people, older adults, ethnic minorities, and those in deprived areas.
- Opportunities to improve equity, such as enhancing green space access, involving underrepresented communities in decision-making, and ensuring communications are inclusive.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

- Martin Whitchurch – Strategic Lead for Greenspace & Conservation (BCP)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group – presented before the consultation to enable us to incorporate their ideas into how we delivered the consultation and understand the barriers to delivering nature recovery.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

10. Is an EQIA required?

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is relevant to the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) because it helps ensure that the strategy is inclusive, fair, and does not unintentionally disadvantage any individuals or communities. It assesses how different groups—such as those defined by age, disability, race, gender, or socio-economic status—might be affected by the strategy's policies and actions. This is especially important in nature recovery, where access to green spaces.

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different protected characteristics.

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive Impact	There will be a positive impact on old people, children and young people as the aim of implementing the strategy looks to improve nature across the county, which also brings benefits for people. A healthy natural environment gives us what we need to survive, from clean air and water, to flood protection and carbon storage,

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		as well as beautiful outdoor places to enjoy. The LNRS will be a guide to other policy and project delivery that may increase direct access to nature as well as indirect health benefits from increased biodiversity and functioning ecosystems.
Disability	Positive Impact	Implementing the strategy looks to improve nature across the county, including accessibility to nature spaces and increasing accessible opportunities for people to get involved in nature recovery activities. Mental and physical health benefits can be expected from increased nature recovery areas and accessibility.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group
Religion and belief	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected characteristic group

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
People with caring responsibilities	Positive Impact	Implementing the strategy looks to improve nature across the county, including accessibility to nature spaces which may benefit people with caring responsibilities.
Rural isolation	Positive Impact	More access to nature areas for recreation and opportunities to help with nature recovery activities should have physical and mental health benefits. Celebrating the nature recovery activities of those in rural communities through nature recovery Dorset could have positive benefits and show how everyone's actions are connected across the county.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive Impact	Implementation of this strategy will include more opportunities for people to get involved in nature recovery and connect with nature.
Single parents	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected group
Armed forces communities	Neutral Impact	Having considered, we don't believe there will any impact on this protected group

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

The implementation of the LNRS is expected to have positive impacts on several groups, particularly older people, children and young people, disabled people, those with caring responsibilities, rural communities, and individuals experiencing socio-economic deprivation. These benefits stem from improved access to nature, enhanced biodiversity, and associated physical and mental health outcomes. For most other protected characteristic groups—including gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and marital status—the strategy is assessed to have a neutral impact, with no anticipated negative effects. The strategy is designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that nature recovery benefits are shared across all communities.

Further environmental impact assessments and EQIAs will be undertaken for specific work packages throughout the delivery phase of the local nature recovery strategy.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Accessibility of the written strategy	We will maintain both a PDF and interactive website version of the strategy. The website version of the strategy was created to be compatible with assistive tech and compliant with the council's content rules. It allows people to navigate the strategy in a less traditional document form. The PDF document version will also be provided as an option for those who prefer to access in this way. During the delivery phase of the strategy, we will take a more targeted approach to sharing specific parts of the strategy in ways tailored to different audiences, to ensure activities and opportunities to deliver nature recovery are easily understood. This may involve videos, campaigns, and meetings.	Bridget Betts, Amy Smith	Development of campaigns etc: Jan-Apr 2026 Delivery: from Apr 2026
Accessibility of the maps	We will look to publish to final maps in a folder on the main version of Dorset Explorer if possible, rather than a separate nature recovery version, to make them easier for people to find. We acknowledge that detailed nature recovery maps are not accessible to all users, particularly due to their interactive online format and there being lots of layers for users to familiarise themselves with and understand what the data shows. Based on the consultation responses, we will replace the one video guide with a series of more targeted videos and explanation notes on how different user groups could use and access the different map layers. As with the videos prepared	Bridget Betts, Amy Smith	December 2025 January 2026

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
	for the public consultation, closed captions will be added to make the videos accessible. There is not likely to be one single solution to meet all accessibility needs with the maps, so we will invite individuals to contact the team with specific requirements. We can then consider if we are able to provide any tailored support, for example if we can provide a printed map of a specific location of interest or written summaries for visually impaired users. We will also continue signposting to the general help documentation on how to use Dorset Explorer for those less familiar with the platform. We will keep reviewing feedback on how people are using the maps and challenges experienced, to tailor our response. Depending on what needs might be identified, we may consider developing further guidance tools, for example new written guides, hosting a webinar or exploring whether it's possible to provide training to digital champion volunteers or library staff to support residents to access the maps.		
Ways for people to get involved in nature recovery	The nature connection priority in the strategy includes a range of activities to deliver to give more people, more opportunities to get involved in nature recovery. Dorset Council could have a role in delivering these activities, along with a range of partner organisations. Our webpage will be updated to provide a sign posting service to opportunities and guidance on how to deliver nature recovery.	Bridget Betts & Amy Smith	Development of webpages: Jan-Apr 2026

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
	Following a suggestion from the former EDI reference group, attend a meeting with the new EDI engagement panel for insight on how different groups in Dorset are able to actively engage in delivering nature recovery and opportunities to improve this.	Bridget Betts & Amy Smith working with Katherine Locke (EDI officer)	early 2026 (depending on meeting availability)
Governance of the delivery phase	When we transition from strategy preparation to delivery phase, Dorset Council's role will be to: • Lead and convene a delivery partnership • Embed LNRS into local decision making • Identify strategic projects and facilitate project development • Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities A group will be formed to oversee this work, with group members selected from across a range of sectors to ensure different perspectives are considered. One of the groups roles will be to consider equality, diversity and inclusion.	Bridget Betts	December 2025
Delivery of nature recovery projects	Delivery of the activities in the strategy, such as enhancing existing habitats or creating new nature-rich spaces, will be delivered by a wide range of sectors across Dorset. In many cases there will be opportunities to consider how actions for nature could also deliver benefits for people and improve equality, diversity and inclusion.		
	Where Dorset Council are involved in project delivery, separate EQIA's will be needed for the specific projects to ensure they are inclusive.	Officers leading on project delivery	as required

The delivery phase of the strategy will run from January 2026 until we are instructed to review and update the local nature recovery strategy by Defra Secretary of State, this could be in 3 to 10 years from publication.

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Bridget Betts

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Amy Smith

Date of completion:13/10/2025

Version Number: 2

EqIA review date:

Equality Lead Sign Off:

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Diversity and Inclusion Officer

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Cabinet

9 December 2025

Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026 - 31

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):
Cllr B Bawden, Cllr S Christopher, Cllr B Bolwell, Cllr D Bolwell, Cllr S Williams, Cllr S Clifford, Cllr G Taylor, Cllr C Monks, Cllr C Kippax, Cllr N Eynsenck, Cllr S Holland, Cllr D Taylor, Cllr R Tarr, Cllr D Northam, Cllr R Biggs, Cllr P Dickenson, Cllr L O'Leary, Cllr N Ireland, Cllr M Baker, Cllr L Beddow, Cllr B Wilson, Cllr B Ezzard, Cllr R Holloway, Cllr G Suttle, Cllr C Tomes, Cllr J Haynes, Cllr D Murcer, Cllr E Parker, Cllr B Cooper, Cllr S Jespersen, Cllr J Somper, Cllr R Legg

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Bridget Betts, Environment, Policy & Partnership Manager
Email: bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 Dorset Council has responsibility for the Dorset National Landscape (formally known as the Dorset AONB) which is designated so that its natural beauty is conserved and enhanced for future generations.

1.2 The Council has a statutory duty to review, and adopt a 5-year National Landscape Management Plan for each National Landscape in their areas

1.3 The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31 is a statutory document that sets out a strategic framework for conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty, aligned with national biodiversity targets and legal duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

1.4 The plan focuses on nature recovery, climate resilience, inclusive access, and sustainable development, structured around four priority themes: Working Landscape, Exploring and Engaging, Planning, and Ways of Working.

1.5 It has been shaped through extensive public and stakeholder consultation, with responses informing the final version which has been approved by their Partnership Board (including Dorset Council Member representation).

1.6 Over £10 million has been invested in landscape-scale projects over the past six years, with Dorset Council's annual contribution generating significant economic and social value.

1.7 Adoption of the plan ensures legal compliance, supports Dorset Council's four corporate priorities, in particular the climate and nature priority, and strengthens the council's position in planning and environmental decision-making.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Dorset Council adopt the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure that the statutory responsibilities in relation to the National Landscapes are met.

4. The report

4.1. Management Plans for Protected Landscapes (National Landscapes) are statutory documents required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

4.2. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 strengthened the duty of public authorities to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in National Landscapes requiring Management Plans to contribute to national biodiversity targets, such as protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030.

4.3. Updated guidance was published by DEFRA and Natural England in June 2025 which means these plans must align with national biodiversity targets and are reviewed every 5 years.

4.4. The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31 (Appendix1) sets out a strategic framework for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape, one of 46 protected landscapes in the UK.

4.5. The plan places a strong emphasis on nature recovery, climate resilience, and inclusive access and has been shaped through extensive collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and the public.

4.6. The plan outlines a shared vision for the landscape, structured around four priority themes:

- Working Landscape – supporting sustainable farming, land management, and nature-based solutions.
- Exploring, Understanding and Engaging – promoting access, education, and cultural heritage.
- Planning – guiding development to respect and enhance landscape character and biodiversity.
- Ways of Working – supporting establishment of good delivery partnerships.

4.7 Over the past six years, the Dorset National Landscape Partnership has invested over £10 million in projects supporting nature, heritage, access, and community engagement. The new plan builds on this foundation and sets out clear priorities for delivery by the Partnership, landowners, communities, and businesses.

4.8 Public consultation of the plan took place 14 July – 22 September 2025 received 140 responses from businesses (10), public (101), organisations (21), town and parish (5) and other (3). Responses were incorporated into the final plan.

4.9 The changes to the draft plan have been approved by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership board and they have approved the final plan for publication on 20 November 2025.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 No alternative options considered as this is a statutory requirement.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Failure to adopt or align with the Management Plan could result in non-compliance with statutory duties and weaken the council's position in planning and environmental decision-making.

7. Financial implications

7.1 Dorset Council annual contribution is £56,300; total direct spend by Dorset National Landscape Partnership for 2024-25 was £2.855M. The annual direct spend is typically around £1.8-2.2M

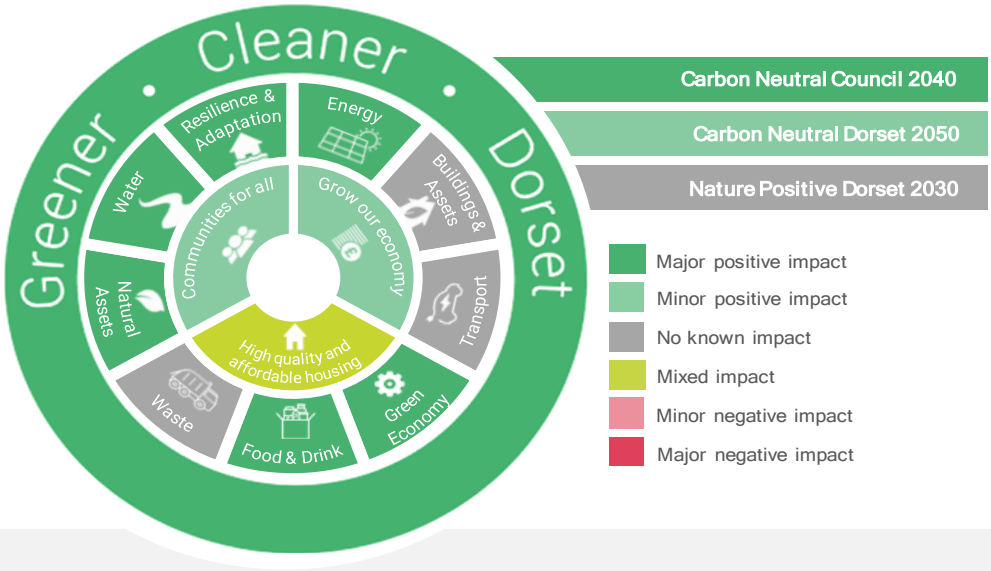
7.2 For every £1 invested by Dorset Council into the Dorset National Landscape, an estimated £50.59 is generated in direct economic value, with the total value rising to £83.70 when including partner contributions and volunteer time, demonstrating a strong return on investment and the wider social,

environmental, and economic benefits of supporting landscape-scale initiatives.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1. The plan is broad and supports work which contributes to the climate and nature crisis priority within the Dorset Council Plan 2024 - 2029 and the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25. Central to the Management Plan is a framework for nature recovery and climate resilience. It aligns with national biodiversity targets and supports climate adaptation and mitigation in farming, land use, and infrastructure planning.

Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026 - 31



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

The accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations for the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31 can be found in appendix 2.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The Plan promotes inclusive access to greenspace, environmental education, and community engagement. It supports health and wellbeing through

connection to nature and encourages volunteering and local stewardship, ensuring all communities benefit from the landscape.

10. **Other implications**

10.1 The Management Plan supports this priority by guiding development within the Dorset National Landscape to ensure it respects the area's natural beauty. It promotes appropriate exception sites for affordable housing, particularly those led by Community Land Trusts, helping to meet local housing needs while maintaining landscape character.

10.2 The Plan contributes to economic growth by supporting sustainable land management, low-carbon tourism, and rural enterprise. It encourages nature-based solutions and green infrastructure that enhance the landscape while creating jobs and attracting investment.

11. **Risk implications**

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: HIGH - if the plans were not adopted, there would be some reputational risk as the plans are a statutory requirement)

Residual Risk: Low

12. **Equalities**

12.1 An EqIA was carried out (appendix 2) and the key outcomes stated that the Management Plan embeds a commitment to equity and inclusion by recognising structural inequalities in access to landscapes, diversifying governance, improving physical and digital accessibility, and broadening cultural representation. It also supports co-designed initiatives and inclusive volunteering, ensuring underserved communities are actively involved in shaping and benefiting from the Dorset National Landscape.

12.2 In addition a Strategic Environmental Assessment was carried out alongside the Management Plan to assess environmental, social, and economic impacts. Key issues such as health, rural isolation, and access for underserved communities were identified and addressed within the Plan’s policies. All objectives were assessed as having neutral or positive impacts, with many delivering targeted benefits to those most in need.

13. **Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 - The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31

13.2 Appendix 2 – The accessible table of Impacts & table of recommendations

13.3 Appendix 3 The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan EQIA

14. Background papers

14.1 More information on the Dorset National Landscape work at: Home | Dorset National Landscape

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Dorset
National
Landscape

DRAFT

MANAGEMENT

PLAN

2026-2031

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OUR VISION

The Dorset National Landscape Partnership is working towards a future in which the management of the landscape and designation enables people to live in harmony with nature. The vision is for a stunningly beautiful, well-protected landscape in which:

- Nature thrives, not just in protected areas and reserves but across the whole landscape. There is a well-linked, expanded network of high-quality habitats managed at a scale which allow functioning natural processes. Streams, rivers, wetlands and groundwaters are naturalised, healthy, wildlife-rich and pollution-free throughout our catchments feeding into a thriving coastal and marine environment.
- Woodlands are expanded and well-managed in low-input, close-to-nature systems; many more trees are evident in the landscape, providing timber, fibre, fruit, nuts and forage, as well as carbon storage and spaces for people and nature. They are linked in the farmed landscape by a network of wide, healthy hedges.
- Climate change has stabilised by achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors – energy, buildings, transport and land use. The landscape is resilient against climate shocks by widespread use of nature-based solutions and healthy farmed soils. There is active adaptation to coastal change for nature and people, enabling natural processes to continue.
- Good quality food is produced by resilient and sustainable farming businesses using regenerative practices having a net benefit for climate and nature. Healthy seas provide sustainable livelihoods for an inshore fishing fleet using practices that avoid habitat harm.
- Heritage assets are protected and well cared for; our cultural heritage is celebrated. It is easy to experience the time depth of this special place.
- A landscape-based, circular economy provides a range of profitable livelihoods, supporting thriving communities and enhancing the place it relies upon. Jobs in the farming, forestry, nature, heritage, visitor economy and cultural sectors are well-rewarded, well-respected and offer a wealth of opportunities for young people and new entrants. There is enough housing to meet a genuinely local need; new build includes locally grown timber and fibre.
- Everyone can easily experience, access, engage with, learn about and celebrate the area's outstanding natural beauty and special qualities and get involved in its enhancement as residents and welcomed visitors. The landscape's outstanding natural and cultural heritage inspires ongoing engagement, learning, research and artistic endeavour.
- The beautiful natural and cultural landscape underpins a high quality of public health and societal wellbeing for all.



MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Protected Landscapes are our most iconic and inspiring places. They were created from 1949, with post-war Britain recognising everyone has a right to access the countryside – from Northumberland's dark skies to the South Downs' Seven Sisters. 75 years on, the needs are greater than ever, with nature underpinning our health, economy and climate. That's why this government will empower Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible.

Covering 25% of England, but half of our priority habitats, Protected Landscapes are essential to nature's recovery. This government understands that we will not achieve our Environment Act targets or commitment to protect 30% of nature by 2030 without Protected Landscapes. Recovering this natural capital is essential to ensure sustainable economic growth. Protected Landscapes are fundamental to strengthening the nation's economic health by looking after the natural resources we depend on. Through nature's recovery, Protected Landscapes protect communities from flooding, fight climate change, enable sustainable food production and create green jobs. They also have a vital role in connecting diverse communities with nature - underpinning the nation's mental and physical health and reducing the strain on our NHS.

This incredible potential is beginning to be set out in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. However, it will only become reality through the work of Protected Landscapes teams in collaboration with local communities, land managers, public bodies and other partners.

Protected Landscape Management Plans provide the focal point for all partners to agree a local ambition and a pathway to deliver it, shaping the future of our most special places, and therefore the country. It is vital that all partners work together to develop and implement Management Plans. To support this collaboration, we have issued guidance on the Protected Landscapes duty which requires relevant authorities to seek to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes.

In recognising their importance to the nation, this government has committed to reinvigorating

Protected Landscapes with new legislation, resources and tools. I look forward to developing this with you and other partners because it is only together that we can protect and enhance these remarkable places for generations to come.

Mary Creagh CBE MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Nature & Protected Landscapes), June 2025.

Postcards from the future: bones of our land

This 2025 poem by Louisa Adjoa Parker is based on 114 postcards gathered during engagement events consulting members of the public about this plan. Respondents were invited to write about what they value about this landscape and their hopes and fears for its future.

From Dorset, 2025

i

dear ones / here we walk through seaside towns / past harbours with still, salted boats / over green-topped sandstone cliffs / hewn from solid gold / we run & ride bikes on the beach / swim in our wide, open seas / our children get to play on sand / some go to forest schools / we search for frogspawn in our ponds / find mushrooms, apples growing wild / watch birds / see clover, lindens, maples, pines / here is a place to think & breathe

ii

dear ones / our seas are filling up with plastic / we're dumping toxic waste / into our fresh water / sewage rises when it rains / our land & coast erodes each day / like ancient bones that turn to dust / seas are forever rising / glass-bright summer days are heating / it's a disappearing, littered landscape / there are too many people / too many dogs / tourists visit all year round / walk up neat gravelled paths / eat fish & chips & drink from cans or plastic cups / pick up their neon towels & leave / forget to take their waste / we wonder if they've forgotten / what nature means to us / our ancient land is not an item / to be ticked off from a list

From Dorset, in the future

Iii

dear ones / our seas rose up & flooded us / ravaged cliffs which stood majestic as they fell / our seas are roiling beasts now / a million kettles on the boil / plastic snakes through tainted water like seaweed / tendrils wrap around the gills of dying fish / clutched at our ankles / when we used to try to swim / plastic bottles bob like apples / unpaired trainers run nowhere / this stuff's forever floating & existing / never sinking to the sea bed / our water's black with sewage & pollution from the labs / unmentionables float past / like fleets of tiny boats / when it rains the stench will rise & fall along the shore / you can smell it from the town / there's nothing left / yet visitors still come & sit amongst the debris / try to catch last rays / of the dying sun

iv

dear ones / here we move through seaside towns / where water's clean & teems with life / our children splash in freshwater / or swim with turtles / in a teal-blue crystal sea / sunsets dip & kiss the beach / a pale moon rises in the sky / watched over by gold cliffs / wildflowers carpet the earth / the air's filled with the sound of birds & the hum of honey bees / plants thrive in rich soil / we've resurrected ghost ponds / watched nature bloom / buses glide across the land / like shoals of gleaming silver fish / we cycle on mycelium paths / connected like the wood-wide web

/ there's space for a few cars / which shine like beetles' wings / here everything is free / we welcome tourists with the sun / together we have learned / to tread the land more lightly

we found the old, wild selves / we yearned for / here, in this land of poetry / where we've gifted nature rights / we protect her fiercely / bones of our land are fusing together / wish you were here / with all our love

1. INTRODUCTION

The Dorset National Landscape is an area of outstanding natural beauty; a landscape of national and international significance for its natural and cultural heritage assets. It is a landscape rich in natural beauty which has been shaped by millennia of human occupation and food production. Natural beauty and landscape quality goes beyond the look of the landscape: it includes the elements which comprise the view (topography, geology, hydrology, wildlife, archaeology and other built heritage) and the cultural heritage made in response to it. This management plan sets out the legal basis and background of this landscape and articulates a policy framework for the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty.

Now in its fifth edition, this management plan builds on previous iterations; it is for the landscape of the designated area, not for one organisation or partnership. It fulfils a legal requirement and is derived through local consensus. It sets out an approach to conserving and enhancing the National Landscape's natural beauty (which itself is further defined). It is for all people and organisations engaged in activities which have implications for the area's natural beauty, such as strategic planning, development management, land management, conservation, celebration and education.
It is the overarching document which describe the policies, landscape condition and implementation strategy, supported by the:

- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which describes the various landscape types and character areas of the National Landscape, their characteristic features and the landscape condition.
- Nature Recovery Plan, the strategic aims of which are embedded in the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Climate Adaptation Plan

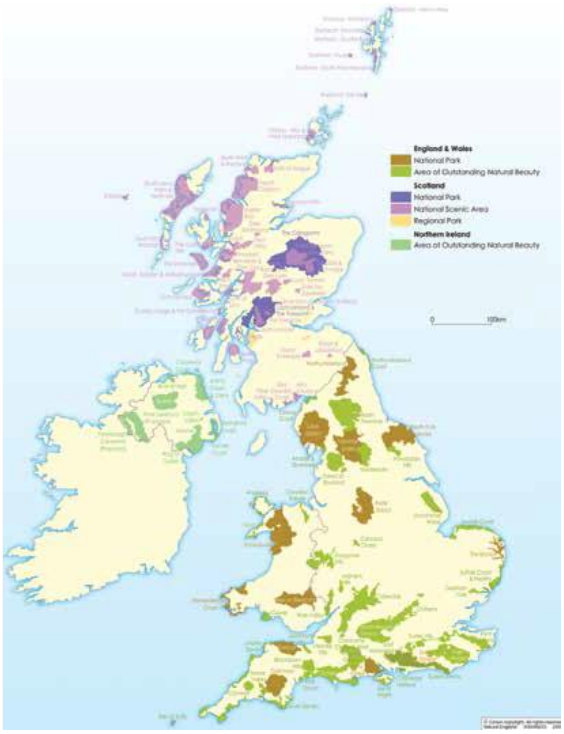
This plan has been developed and reviewed with the input and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Through this process, local people and organisations have provided extensive input in identifying the local actions and priorities that will conserve and enhance this nationally important landscape.

This plan has been subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment, an Equalities Impacts Assessment and a Habitats Regulations Assessment. Each has helped shape the policy framework and adds to its robustness.

2. NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

This chapter describes the legal background to designation, defines natural beauty, describes the geography of the Dorset National Landscape, describes how the designation and place are managed, and describes how the partnership may work beyond the boundary.

National Landscapes are areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs). They are nationally important protected landscapes, sharing the highest level of protection with 13 National Parks. Dorset is one of 46 National Landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. With National Parks, these make up our finest countryside and are protected in the national interest for future generations. National Landscapes are also recognised internationally by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as part of the global family of protected areas.



2.1. Purposes and Duties: the legal basis

National Landscapes are designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The purposes of the National Landscape designation were updated and confirmed by the Countryside Commission in 1991 as follows:

- The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 confirmed the significance of National Landscapes and created improved arrangements for their management. There are three key sections of the Act for National Landscapes:

- Recently amended by the Levelling up & Regeneration Act 2023, Section 85 places a statutory duty on all 'relevant authorities' including a government department or public body, any statutory undertaker and any person holding public office, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function affecting land in a National Landscape.
- Section 89 places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to act jointly to produce a Management Plan for each National Landscape in their administrative area.
- Section 90 describes the notification required during the National Landscape Management Plan-making process.

National Landscapes are defined as areas outside National Parks, but considered to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable to protect them. Government has confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and National Landscapes are equivalent and current guidance makes it clear that the practical application of the natural beauty criterion is identical for both designations, as is their equivalent importance and protection.

2.2. Natural beauty

Natural beauty remains largely undefined in legislation, despite being central to the NPAC Act 1949. Since then, qualifications and amendments to the legislation make it clear that natural beauty includes wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage while not being restricted to them.

Government guidance relating to National Landscapes provides a useful non-technical definition: '**Natural beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries**'. More recently the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty'.

Landscape beauty is not limited to the visual character but includes all aspects which underpin and contribute to that character. Landscape function and ecological integrity are important measures of landscape beauty. Therefore, nature recovery and the conservation of built and cultural heritage are central to the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Chapter 5 describes the area's special qualities in further detail; these are this area's specific elements of natural beauty.

2.3. The Dorset National Landscape

The Dorset National Landscape was designated in 1959 and is the fifth largest. It covers 1,129 square kilometres, approximately 42% of the county.

It stretches from Lyme Regis in the west, along the coast to Poole Harbour in the east, and north to Hambledon Hill near Blandford Forum. It covers over half of Poole Harbour, including Brownsea and the smaller islands. Outside of Poole Harbour and the Fleet the designated area ends at mean low water, but with a significant extent of coastline the seaward setting and adjacent marine environment is important to the National Landscape's condition. The Dorset National Landscape also includes small areas in Somerset and Devon.

The Dorset National Landscape has approximately 76,700 people living within it, 743,000 within 10km and over 2.15 million people living within 65km of the boundary. Some market and coastal towns lie within the National Landscape: Lyme Regis, Bridport, Beaminster and Swanage.

2.4. Geographic Context

The Dorset National Landscape is connected to land, ecosystems, people and business beyond its boundaries. The Dorset National Landscape lies within an area known for its outstanding environmental quality. To the east are the internationally important urban heaths around Poole and Bournemouth and the New Forest National Park. To the northeast, the Dorset National Landscape shares a boundary with the Cranborne Chase National Landscape near Blandford. To the west lie the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and the East Devon National Landscape which meets the Dorset National Landscape at Lyme Regis and includes the western section of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Much of the surrounding countryside in Dorset, while not being covered by landscape designations, is still of extremely high quality. To the north lies the Blackmore Vale, to the south the Isle of Portland and separating the National Landscape's northern downs from the Isle of Purbeck are the lower Frome and Piddle valleys. Significant and growing urban populations adjacent to the National Landscape at Dorchester, Weymouth, Yeovil, Taunton and the Poole-Bournemouth conurbation look to the National Landscape as an area for leisure and recreation.

As a coastal protected landscape, management of the Dorset National Landscape must also take into account its links to the marine environment. Harbour and saline lagoons lie within the boundary in Poole Harbour and the Fleet. Outside these areas the National Landscape boundary is at Mean Low Water. Activities within the marine elements of the National Landscape as well as out at sea can have significant implications for the character and qualities

of the National Landscape, and a high-quality marine environment is just as crucial to the National Landscape's integrity as a high-quality terrestrial environment.

2.5. Managing the Dorset National Landscape

Most of the Dorset National Landscape is in private ownership and actively farmed (over 70%). The Dorset National Landscape Partnership has influence over the landscape through the planning process, by offering and shaping grants and other incentives, and through guidance and advice. There are many decisions affecting the landscape over which the Partnership has no direct influence; however it seeks to improve understanding of the designation to enable better decisions to be taken.

Delivery of the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan is coordinated by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership, which brings together local authorities, statutory agencies, local community and landowner representatives (key partners are listed in chapter 8). The Partnership has a dedicated staff team which delivers a wide range of projects and advises on activities and initiatives in the National Landscape. Core activity is funded by Defra and Dorset Council as the local authority with responsibility for this National Landscape; significant additional funds are raised for Partnership projects.

The Partnership also works closely with a wide range of organisations, communities and landowners across the area, notably Activate Performing Arts, Dorset Arts Development Company, Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset Council, Dorset Food & Drink, Dorset Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, and many others. The success of the Partnership is dependent on its close working relations with these organisations and those who farm, live and work here.

The National Landscape Partnership also works with the Dorset Health & Wellbeing Board, Dorset Local Nature Partnership, Catchment Partnerships and the Local Access Forum, raising issues and promoting opportunities afforded by the National Landscape.

2.6. Working beyond the Dorset National Landscape

The Dorset National Landscape Partnership is a member of the National Landscapes Association and Europarc, which bring together the family of protected landscapes national and European levels. Through membership of these bodies, the Dorset National Landscape Partnership develops joint initiatives, shares experience, influences policy and supports campaigns for greater recognition and protection for National Landscapes.

Many of the principles of this Management Plan can be applied to landscapes outside the National Landscape boundary. Where appropriate, the Dorset National Landscape Partnership works with partners to deliver projects across the county of Dorset rather than just within the National Landscape, ensuring that the context of the National Landscape is recognised. Many projects also operate collaboratively to make best use of available resources.

3. THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

This chapter describes what the plan is for, who it is for, how it related to other plans and strategies and illustrates the impact of previous plans.

3.1. What is the Plan for?

This plan is for guiding and inspiring action that will bring us closer to achieving the vision. It meets the statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Management Plan but goes beyond that requirement by:

- Bringing together partners to develop a vision and target action for this protected landscape.
- Promoting collaboration in action for best results.
- Helping to prioritise public investment, for example agri-environment or rural development grant.
- Providing a framework for private investment, for example commercial or philanthropic.
- Providing a policy framework within which the National Landscape Partnership can bring partners together to design, resource and implement programmes of action.

The plan places a focus on how the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty will be delivered; social and economic issues are covered in terms of their relationship to that primary purpose.

3.2. Who is the Plan for?

The National Landscape Management Plan is just that – a plan for the National Landscape area. It provides a framework that can help guide all activities that might affect the National Landscape. Its audiences include:

- National Landscape Partnership organisations – these organisations will have a key role in delivering and championing the Management Plan.
- Relevant authorities – all public bodies, statutory undertakers and persons holding public office have a duty to seek to further the purpose of the National Landscape; this Management Plan will guide them in fulfilling their statutory duties.
- Landowners and managers – those who own and manage land in the National Landscape have a vital role to play; the plan aims to guide, support and attract resources for sensitive management of the National Landscape.
- Local communities – everyone who lives and works in the National Landscape can play an active role in caring for it; the plan identifies some of the priorities for action and ways to get involved.

3.3. How does it relate to other plans, strategies and processes?

This plan should be used to guide and inform all other plans and activities developed by public bodies and statutory undertakers that may affect the National Landscape, in line with their duty to seek to further the purpose of the designation. It should also be used for other people and organisations in and around the National Landscape so that they may contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape.

- This plan will help promote and support local delivery of the Environment Improvement Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including a range of biodiversity, water quality and landscape initiatives.
- Public investment strategies: it can guide the targeting and prioritising of land management grants and other rural industry grants or loans.
- Local & spatial plans: it provides part of the evidence base for the Dorset Local Plan (and those in neighbouring counties) for housing and employment land, transport, waste and minerals and rights of way.

- Marine plans: provides part of the evidence base for the Marine Plan (South).
- Development management: local planning authorities and the Marine Management Organisation have a statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of the National Landscape when making planning decisions. In making these decisions the relevant authority should seek the advice of Natural England, the statutory agency responsible for National Landscapes. In addition, this Management Plan is a material consideration in the planning process. Planning authorities seek advice from the National Landscape Team under the Dorset National Landscape planning protocol.
- Health and wellbeing plans: it can guide the implementation of the nature-based preventative health measures in the NHS Change programme.
- Catchment plans: it provides part of the evidence base for the partnership catchment management plans within the National Landscape (currently the Poole Harbour and Stour Catchments Plans). It also influences River Basin Management Plans and water company investment plans.
- Community planning: it can help inform neighbourhood and parish plans and community strategies.
- The Dorset & East Devon World Heritage Site Management Plan: this plan outlines the statutory landscape protections for the site and its setting in the collective interests of all humanity.
- Cultural strategies such as Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy and the Dorset Cultural Strategy: it can add context and local distinctiveness to enhance implementation.

3.4. What have previous plans helped to achieve?

Earlier editions of the plan have underpinned the work of the Dorset National Landscape Partnership and a wide range of contributors. Over the period 2019-2025, the last management plan helped attract over £10M investment through the National Landscape Partnership alone for conservation, access, understanding and celebration activities. It also helped guide National Grid's investment of over £100M to underground the high voltage electricity lines between Winterbourne Abbas and Corton, influenced considerably further millions invested through agri-environment schemes. The following examples highlight the ways in which the National Landscape Partnership operate:

- Development management and planning gain: the policies and detail within the plan has helped limit harmful development within the National Landscape and enabled a framework for mitigation and compensation where residual significant impacts remain at the approval of certain proposals. During the plan period the £1.7M Wytch Farm Landscape Enhancement Fund was fully committed to projects enhancing landscape character and non-car access; further compensatory funds were secured for impacts around Swanworth Quarry and two large solar developments outside the National Landscape near Owermoigne.

- The Wild Purbeck Partnership continued after the initial project delivery role, convening partners to plan and coordinate better management for nature. Arising from this partnership in 2020 was the country's first 'super' National Nature Reserve, the Purbeck Heaths of 3,331 hectares under the ownership of seven different landowners, encompassing one of lowland England's wildest landscapes. A National Landscape-led bid for Green Recovery Challenge Funds enabled the development of the Wilder Grazing Unit, an unfenced area of 1370 hectares in which cattle, ponies, pigs and wild deer graze together.
  In West Dorset, the National Landscape team convenes partners to deliver water quality enhancements in the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams catchment, pioneering a

community-led approach. The partnership was instrumental in securing Environment Agency funding for a programme of Natural Flood Management implementation and monitoring and working with West Dorset Wilding and others to coordinate efforts of citizen scientists.

- Supported by the Community Lottery programme, Stepping into Nature continued into a second 3-year programme providing nature connectedness for older people, those living with dementia and their carers. The partnership included many landowning environmental organisations who increased their engagement and provision for older people, and was part of a wider collaboration on health with the Dorset Local Nature Partnership. It has now evolved into Nature Buddies, developing a volunteer base to assist people with long-term health conditions to experience greater connection to their local environments.
  The Dorset National Landscape team also led the FLAVOURS project partnership delivering a programme of landscape and food-based experiences for minority ethnic and refugee groups, building relationships and informing a joint ambition for co-creating further similar activities.

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) programme was co-designed with government, in recognition of Protected Landscapes organisations' role as trusted honest brokers. In Dorset, over the programme's first 4 years to March 2025 nearly £2.7M was redistributed achieving outcomes for people, nature, climate and place, cementing the National Landscape team's role in securing good results by enabling farmer-led innovation. The programme has reached around a quarter of the landscape's farm businesses over roughly a quarter of the area.
  Alongside FIPL, government also provided funding of £250,374 via the Access for All programme (3 years to March 2025), enabling a broader range of people to access the landscape through infrastructure improvements.

- While there are several examples of national collaborative work through the National Landscapes Association, Nature Calling is an excellent recent example. Arts Council England funds were secured nationally, which enabled 8 hub landscapes (of which Dorset National Landscape was one) to undertake two creative commissions to engage with underserved communities and share the learning and expertise with neighbouring protected landscapes. Dorset National Landscape engaged producers Activate Performing Arts and Louisa Adjoa Parker who created the written piece This Land, reflecting on landscape and belonging after undertaking a series of interviews. Arts collective Radical Ritual were also engaged to produce the artwork Consequences – a giant game of consequences, inspired by the Cerne Abbas Giant, co-designing it with 200 people from the Yeovil area in the process.

- In addition, many community projects delivering aspects of the plan were encouraged and supported through the provision of small grants. Enabling community-led creativity in plan delivery is an important principle.

4. THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

This chapter describes the national and international political, environmental and socio-economic background, all forces for landscape change.

The Dorset National Landscape, its management and access to it as guided by this plan can provide solutions to the many challenges listed below. Landscape as a framework for action can enable positive partnership working between agencies, owners, occupiers and local communities.

4.1. Political

4.1.1. National policy

Since the production of the last plan, the Environment Act (2021) received Royal Assent. Key aspects within it include:

- Environmental Improvement Plan, (EIP) building on the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework requires reporting on progress towards 3 key Environmental Improvement Plan goals (1: thriving plants and wildlife; 7: mitigating and adapting to climate change and 10: enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment). It also includes goals for increasing the area of nature-friendly farming and increasing private investment in nature recovery. The EIP is, at the time of writing, subject to a rapid review.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS): at the time of writing the Dorset LNRS has been adopted. This covers the vast majority of the Dorset National Landscape and builds on previous mapping work led by the National Landscape team.

Net Zero Strategy

- The UK is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 100% compared to 1990 levels by 2050. A legally binding target was set by an amendment to the Climate Change Act 2008.

At the time of writing, the Government has also committed to developing two strategies that will affect decisions about land in National Landscapes:

- A Land Use Framework, which is intended to aid planning for development, food security and nature recovery. Government is considering public consultation responses.
- A National Food Strategy, intended to focus on food security, health, environment and economy.

Planning and development policy is also shifting with local authorities being required to provide for a much greater housing supply in Local Plans. Nutrient rules for catchments draining into protected sites (Poole Harbour, the Axe and the Fleet) still require the nutrient contribution from new housing in the catchment to be offset by taking land out of intensive agriculture. A Planning and Infrastructure Bill is before parliament at the time of writing.

The health system is also changing with clustering becoming more regionalised (and less local) and the NHS Change Programme is also under way, seeking to develop a 10-year Health Plan. Opportunities for preventative measures through nature connection are as relevant as ever.

4.1.2. Devolution

There is a drive to create sub-regional mayoral authorities. It is expected that some environmental activities would be coordinated at this scale. Dorset entered a bid with Wiltshire and Somerset in 2025 that wasn't accepted into the priority programme. There remains the political will, and it may progress during the lifespan of this management plan.

4.1.3. Public finances

Public funding is limited, with the economy still suffering from the shocks of Brexit, the global pandemic and war in Ukraine. Departmental budgets are constrained, and successive short-term spending reviews have hampered long-term planning. Funds for achieving environmental outcomes are at threat of being diverted to other parts of the national budget.
At the time of writing, Government spending reviews have limited revenue funding for National Landscapes while continuing to provide sums of capital funding. This reduces time and resources available for developing broad programmes of work.
Local authority funding is at a severe low ebb, with rising demands from adult and social care causing the need to look for savings elsewhere.

4.2. Environmental

4.2.1. Nature and climate emergency

These conjoined emergencies are widely accepted. Driven by numerous factors globally, most notably fossil fuel combustion and land conversion, loss of biodiversity and natural abundance affects, and is affected by the changing climate. Even with stabilised emissions, the average global temperature is forecast to rise to a point at which extreme weather events, storminess, flooding and sea level rise are almost certain.
Disruption to nature, through habitat destruction, pollution, pests and diseases, and exploitation is causing a rapid rate of change; extinctions and genetic bottlenecks result, threatening the resilience of our future. Heritage assets are also increasingly at risk from climate change, with soil loss affecting below ground archaeology and gales and water ingress affecting historic buildings.
The future impacts will manifest themselves on a country that is already one of the most nature-depleted in the world, leading quickly to irreversible loss.

4.2.2. Catchment issues

Intrinsic to the nature emergency, the National Landscape's water resources are subject to significant nutrient loading from agriculture and sewage, both current and historical (especially the Poole Harbour catchment, River Axe catchment, The Fleet catchment). A significant challenge facing the rivers, streams and tidal water within the National Landscape and its marine setting relates to the impact of nutrients and eutrophication. In addition, many rivers and streams are highly modified in order to encourage faster drainage.
The increase in forecast intensive rainfall events, combined with inappropriate land use choices, will lead to increased turbidity of rivers and streams as well as increased flood risk, putting people at greater risk.

4.3. Socio-economic

4.3.1. Land-based economy

Through the Agricultural Transition, basic payments for supporting agricultural operations are due to be phased out completely by 2028. The food system which drives many farm decisions is dysfunctional: farmers struggle to set a price for their products in the face of the massive bargaining power of the small number of major retailers; English farm incomes hit a significant low in 23-24, particularly lowland mixed grazing (latest statistics at time of writing). At the same time, the system encourages the continued production of commodity crops (cereals, meat, eggs, and milk) in which the UK tends to be more self-sufficient while returns for market gardening are very low, even though these are the categories in which the UK is least self-sufficient. This has dietary and environmental consequences.

Regenerative forms of agriculture present a huge opportunity by increasing the circularity of each farm's economy, reducing reliance on external inputs of fuel, fertiliser and pesticide. Additionally, this focus on soil health during food production appears to increase that food's nutrient density.
There are wider opportunities to describe and develop a new nature-based local economy that is circular rather than extractive, contributing to and feeding from a high quality natural environment.

4.3.2. Green finance

It is widely quoted that restoring the UK's natural wealth requires at least £44 billion over the next decade, needing both public and private finance. Currently, private investment is minimal, with only £95 million per year. The government is committed to increasing the flow of private finance into nature restoration; at the time of writing a peatland and woodland code exist for the transparent trading of carbon benefits. The remaining potential markets are underdeveloped and have no accepted framework to underwrite trading.
Green finance can take various forms. Offsetting is where environmental damage in one area is offset by investment in restoration in another. Risk reduction is where a private asset may be protected by investment in nature-based solutions, for instance where the owner of an industrial site in low-lying land may invest in slowing the flow of water through the catchment to reduce the likelihood of flooding. Environmental and social governance investment is frequently done to maintain (or enhance) an enterprise's good environmental reputation. Looking ahead, it is likely that enterprises will be required to make disclosures about their impact on nature and climate, and statements on what they are doing to mitigate it as part of their annual reporting, through the Taskforce for Climate/Nature-based Financial Disclosures. Philanthropic funding is also a possibility.

4.3.3. Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Equality Act (2010) has underpinned a movement towards greater levels of equality, although many parts of society still experience discrimination. Historically underserved communities in the Dorset National Landscape are minority ethnic and refugee communities, young people and those on low incomes. In addition, it is recognised that additional efforts need to be made by the partnership to include people living with long-term health conditions and their carers, and those experiencing rural isolation.
The Landscapes Review (2019) highlighted the real and perceived barriers to accessing the countryside faced by many people, particularly those from the global majority, disabled and/or with low incomes. The review also remarked upon the lack of diversity in the land management sector and in the governance of protected landscapes.
A lack of diversity in audiences engaged in protected landscapes limits national representation in these national assets, the potential supporter base, and risks creating a culture of exclusivity.

4.3.4. Housing affordability

According to the National Housing Federation, the average house price in Dorset increased to £331,426 in 2025, which is around 10 times the average salary. Many young people and those on wages associated with land management are being effectively priced out of the countryside. Alongside this, there is a shortage of truly affordable and social housing. This national trend is exacerbated by Dorset's desirability as a retirement, second home and holiday destination.

4.3.5. Health and wellbeing crisis

2021 Census data show 29.6% of the Dorset population is aged 65+ compared to a national figure of 18.6%. Dorset has a significantly older population than the national average, continuing a trend of recent decades. This growing number of older people will increase demand for health

and social care services, leading to more family members finding themselves acting as informal carers.
Alongside the growing population, the Dorset Local Nature Partnership recognise a wider health and wellbeing crisis: exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic, we are witnessing increases in diet-related illnesses (e.g. diabetes) and a surge of mental health issues. Exercise rates are low, engagement with nature is poor and health inequalities remain.

4.3.6. Environmental awareness

There continues to be a growth in environmental awareness. Climate change awareness, health interests and concern for animal rights is seeing a dietary shift away from red meat, although dairy consumption remains relatively stable. There is a growth in interest in not only local food, but food that is not associated with environmental harms. Hundreds of people have participated in curated Food Conversations in Dorset, the outputs of which will feed into the national Food Strategy. The Feeding Dorset Partnership has joined the county to the Sustainable Food Places programme; Bridport is the county's first Sustainable Food town.
There is a sustained demand for renewable energy, and many people are trying to reduce their consumption of, and reliance on fossil fuels. Awareness of the nature and climate emergency is particularly wide among young people, many of whom suffer from climate anxiety.
Community-based environmental organisations such as Planet Purbeck and the Dorset Climate Action Network are well-subscribed and are effective at mobilising their community audience.
However, alongside these trends, there has been increased polarisation in attitudes towards climate change, environment, food security, equality and other related socio-environmental factors.

5. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This chapter is largely derived from other official sources. It describes the elements of natural beauty that are important to this landscape.

National Landscapes are designated for their outstanding natural beauty. Natural beauty goes beyond the visual appearance of the landscape, including flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, manmade, historic and cultural associations and our sensory perceptions of it. The combination of these factors in each area gives a unique sense of place and helps underpin our quality of life.
The natural beauty of this National Landscape is described in a suite of special qualities or properties that together make it unique and outstanding, underpinning its designation as a nationally important protected landscape. These are the elements we need to conserve and enhance for the future and they should be considered in all decisions affecting the National Landscape. This Statement of Significance is based on the 1993 Assessment of the Dorset National Landscape produced by the Countryside Commission. The special qualities of the Dorset National Landscape are:

5.1. Contrast and diversity – a microcosm of England's finest landscapes…

The National Landscape is much more than one fine landscape – it is a collection of fine landscapes, each with its own characteristics and sense of place, including different landforms, soils and wildlife habitats. Contrasting and complex geology gives rise to the chalk downland, limestone country, heathlands, greensand ridges and clay vales that occur in the Dorset National Landscape; they are often closely juxtaposed to create striking sequences of beautiful countryside that are unique in Britain. The transitions between the component landscapes of the mosaic are often particularly attractive, with strong contrasts in some areas and a gentle transition of character in others.
The ridge tops and chalk escarpments add an extra dimension to the Dorset National Landscape by providing stark contrasts of landform that serve to increase and emphasise its diversity. These areas of higher ground also allow the observer uninterrupted panoramic views to appreciate the complex pattern and textures of the surrounding landscapes.
Nowhere is the contrast and diversity of this rich assemblage of landscapes more graphically illustrated than in the Isle of Purbeck. Here, many of the characteristic landscapes of the Dorset National Landscape are represented on a miniature scale to create scenery of spectacular beauty and contrasts, which mirrors that of the whole area.
Within this overall context, there are numerous individual landmarks, such as hilltop earthworks, monuments and tree clumps that help to contribute an individuality and sense of place at a local scale.
In addition to its outstanding scenic qualities, the National Landscape retains a sense of tranquillity and remoteness that is an integral part of these landscapes. It retains dark night skies and an undeveloped rural character. The National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessment, 'Conserving Character', adds further understanding of the contrast and diversity of the area's landscapes and their management requirements.

5.1.1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The area's diverse landform and striking changes in topography are dictated by the National Landscape's varied geology, upon which subsequent erosion has occurred. This 'land-shape' has then been inhabited, built upon and in some places modified by several thousand years of

population. It is important to note that the landscape continues to be dynamic, with many active natural processes sustaining natural beauty.

Landscape and natural beauty

Landscape is a framework which encompasses geological, hydrological, biological, and historical qualities, as perceived by people thereby influenced by cultural and social factors. The Dorset National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessment describes these features and qualities in more detail, by subdividing the area into character types and character areas.
Running throughout each character area are qualities that make the National Landscape inspiring and special, such as the sense of tranquillity and remoteness and sweeping views across diverse landscapes. The variety of landscape types found within the area is a defining feature of the National Landscape underpinned by diverse geology, with dramatic changes from high chalk and greensand ridges to low undulating vales or open heaths. It is often the transition from one landscape type to another that creates drama and scenic quality. At the local level, individual landmark features and boundaries add to character.
Under this aspect of the National Landscape's special qualities and natural beauty, however, the main consideration is for the characteristics and qualities of the landscape, such as the undeveloped rural character, tranquillity and remoteness, dark night skies and panoramic views. Through the main modes of interaction with the place, this plan considers some of the broad issues that can affect them. Landscape character and condition are more fully described in Chapter 6.

5.2. Wildlife of national and international significance…

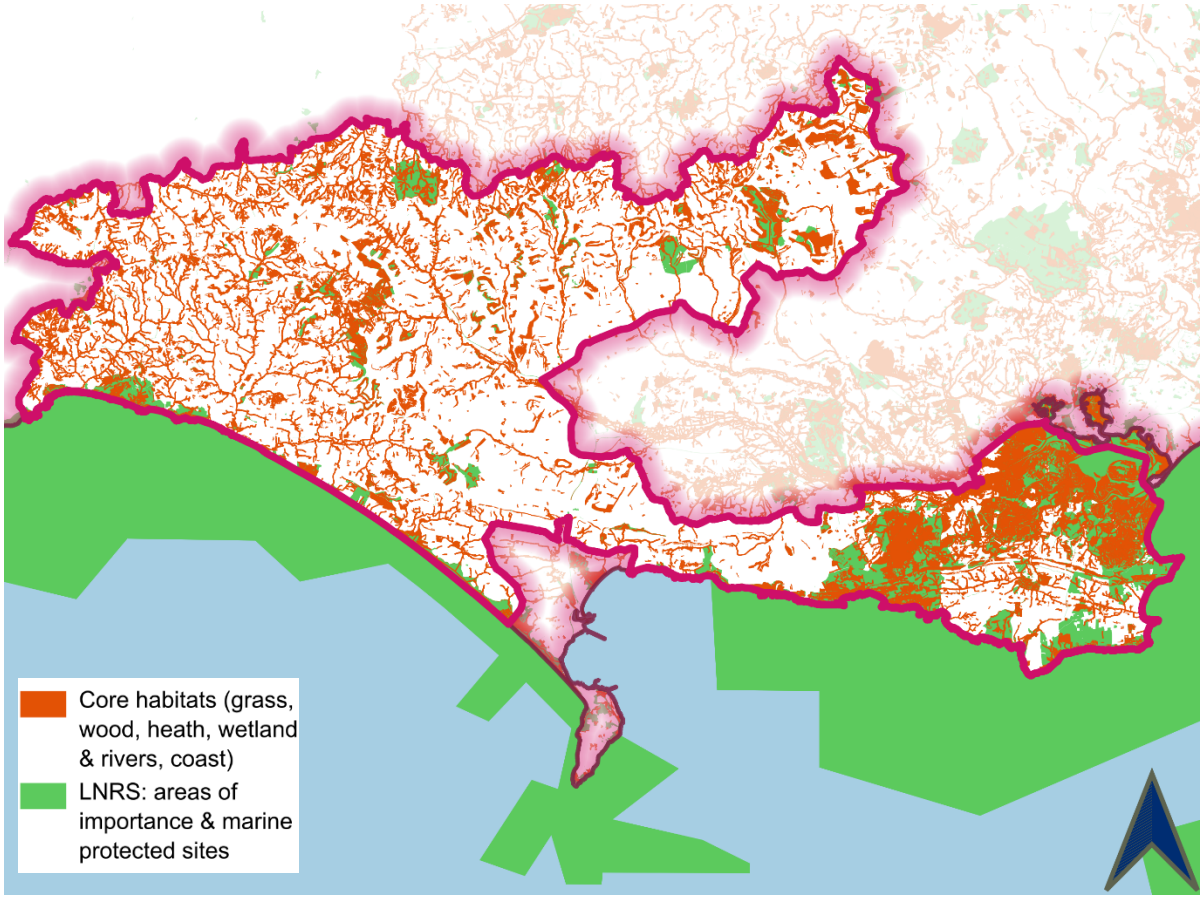
The contrast and diversity of the National Landscape is reflected in its wildlife. The range of habitats and associated species is unusually rich, including 83% of all British mammal species, 48% of bird species and 70% of butterfly species. The UK's richest grid squares for vascular plants and mammals are both found in the Dorset National Landscape. The National Landscape's southern location and relatively warm climate make it hospitable to many species unable to survive further north and home to species new to Britain, naturally expanding their ranges with the changing climate. The National Landscape includes many areas of international significance, including Poole Harbour and the Fleet which are key sites for breeding and overwintering birds, lowland heath areas in the east, calcareous grasslands in the Cerne and Sydling Valleys and Purbeck Coast, ancient woodlands at Bracketts Coppice and the West Dorset alder woods, and important cliff and maritime habitats along significant sections of the coast. Two marine SACs are adjacent to significant lengths of the National Landscape's coastline; there are two candidate marine SPAs and three Marine Conservation zones adjacent to the National Landscape boundary. Further coastal and marine areas are proposed for protection.
Many other areas are important at the national level and are supported by a large number of locally significant sites.
The quality of the wider National Landscape offers high potential to rebuild extensive mosaics of wildlife habitat and to improve the linkages between them.

5.2.1. BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them. Biodiversity matters because it supports the vital services we get from the natural environment. It contributes to our economy, our health and wellbeing and it enriches our lives. Dorset has an exceptional wealth of biodiversity and this plan addresses the issues and opportunities for the species, habitats and natural systems in the Dorset National Landscape. There has been a long history of partnership working to deliver biodiversity conservation in the county, and this plan seeks to complement this.

Biodiversity and natural beauty

Biodiversity is a fundamental element of natural beauty. The National Landscape's wealth of wildlife, from the common and widespread to the globally rare, is one of the outstanding qualities that underpin its designation. The biodiversity of the National Landscape is shaped by the underlying geology and its influence on soils and hydrology. It is also influenced by the social, cultural and economic activities of past and present land use, which biodiversity supports by providing resources such as food, timber, clean water and crop pollination amongst others. Biodiversity also provides us with opportunities for recreation, relaxation and inspiration and a range of associated tourism opportunities. Dorset is particularly rich in some habitats and species. For example, lowland heathland and the characteristic species associated with it form a recognisable landscape across southern England, but in Dorset there is a concentration of species such as sand lizards and smooth snakes that do not occur in such numbers anywhere else in the country. The same could be said of the coastal habitats of Poole Harbour and the Fleet within the boundary and the marine SACs on its southern boundary. Since 1945, the landscape has changed markedly in response to changes in economic, agricultural and forestry policies. For example, some of our most cherished wildlife areas have become degraded over time through habitat loss and fragmentation associated with agricultural intensification, conifer afforestation and increasing development pressures. Also, increased use of artificial fertilizers as a result of the drive for food self-sufficiency that followed the Second World War has led to nutrient enrichment of many watercourses, leading to additional impacts on wildlife, particularly in Poole Harbour and the Fleet. Current and future pressures and competing land uses will continue to have impacts, including agricultural policy, climate change, invasive species (new pests and diseases). A step-change in our approach to nature conservation is required to ensure that natural systems are repaired and rebuilt, creating a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and ourselves. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will guide this step change, in conjunction with local data on functioning ecological networks and habitat restoration opportunities.



Map 1 Environmental assets

Description of the resource

The Dorset National Landscape encompasses a breadth of biodiversity – chalk and limestone grassland which is found across the National Landscape and along the coast; lowland heathland concentrated in the eastern part of the National Landscape; ancient meadows and woodlands scattered throughout; the coastal habitats of Poole Harbour and the Fleet; and maritime coast and cliff along much of the Jurassic Coast. This is reflected through a number of nature conservation designations:

- Three Ramsar Sites; wetlands of global importance: Chesil Beach and the Fleet, Poole Harbour, and Dorset Heathlands. In total they cover 5.1% of the National Landscape.
- Thirteen Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) of international importance for habitats and species within or directly adjacent: Bracket's Coppice; Cerne and Sydling Downs; Chesil and the Fleet; Crookhill Brick Pit; Dorset Heaths; Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes; Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs; Lyme Bay and Torbay; River Axe; Sidmouth to West Bay; St. Aldhelm's Head to Durlston Head; Studland to Portland; and West Dorset Alder Woods. In total they cover 5.8% of the National Landscape.
- Four Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of international importance for birds: Chesil Beach and the Fleet; Dorset Heathlands; Poole Harbour; and Solant and Dorset Coast. In total they cover 6.2% of the National Landscape. Together, SACs and SPAs form a network of 'Natura 2000' sites - European sites of the highest value for rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species.
- Three Marine Conservation Zones, protected for nationally important marine wildlife, habitats, geology, and geomorphology: Studland Bay; Purbeck Coast; and Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges.

- Ten National Nature Reserves (NNRs) lie wholly or partly within the National Landscape: Arne Reedbeds; Axemouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs; Durlston; Hambledon Hill; Hog Cliff; Holton Heath; Horn Park Quarry; Kingcombe; Purbeck Heaths; and Valley of the Stones. In total they cover 3.6% of the National Landscape.
- 75 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), of national importance for their wildlife and/or geological interest, which cover 10.9% of the National Landscape.
- 679 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs), which cover 5.8% of the National Landscape.
- 1,581 hectares of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and 1,485 hectares of Plantation on Ancient Woodland. Combined they cover 3,066 hectares and 2.7% of the National Landscape.
- Seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) covering less than 1% of the National Landscape. These are for people and wildlife, their designation reflecting the special value of wildlife and greenspaces to a local community: Asker's Meadow; Bothenhampton; Crookhill Brickpit; Hilfield Hill; Jellyfields; Peveril Point and the Downs; and Woolland Hill

The National Landscape includes 25 of the 65 England Priority Terrestrial and Maritime Habitats, along with 281 of the 639 Priority Species, including early gentian, southern damselfly, Bechstein's bat, marsh fritillary, sand lizard and nightjar. The majority of the land-based habitats are under agricultural or forestry management and in private ownership.

Much of the biodiversity is linked to a range of habitats across the National Landscape, which, whilst previously much more extensive, remain as a core of high biodiversity and the basis of a functioning ecological network. Strengthening the network will enable the landscape to tolerate environmental change and will also greatly contribute to the aesthetic quality. Hedges, stone walls, streams, ancient trees, copses, rough grassland, scrub, small quarries, ponds, fallow fields and uncultivated margins; all these are valuable assets to the National Landscape's biodiversity, landscape character and cultural heritage.

5.3. A living textbook and historical record of rural England…

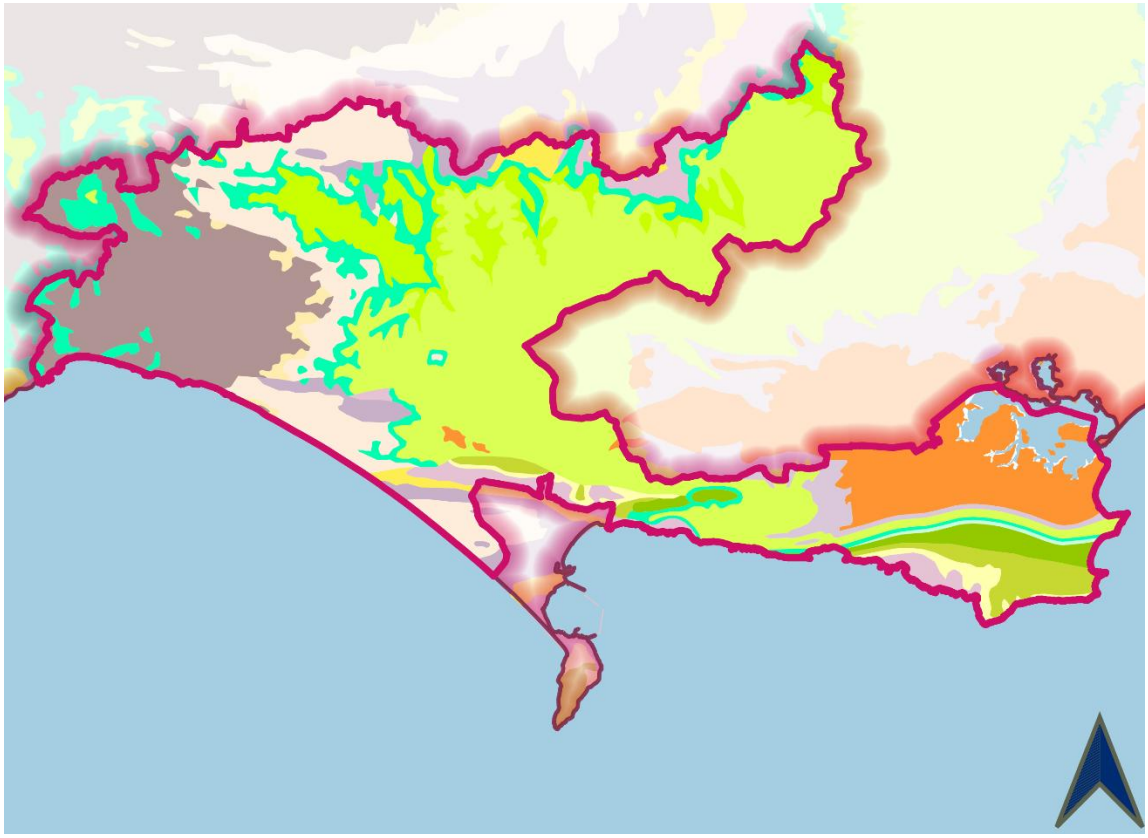
The Dorset National Landscape boasts an unrivalled expression of the interaction of geology, human influence and natural processes in the landscape.
In particular, the Dorset National Landscape has an exceptional undeveloped coastline, renowned for its spectacular scenery, geological and ecological interest and unique coastal features including Chesil Beach and the Fleet Lagoon, Lulworth Cove and the Fossil Forest, Durdle Door and Old Harry Rocks. The unique sequential nature of the rock formations along the Dorset and East Devon's Jurassic Coast tells the story of 185 million years of earth history. The dynamic nature of the coast means that it is constantly changing and new geological discoveries are constantly being made, emphasising the importance of natural coastal processes. The significance and value of the geological time sequence and the active coastal processes are reflected in the designation of the coast as a World Heritage Site.
With relatively little large-scale development, the Dorset National Landscape retains a strong sense of continuity with the past, supporting a rich historic and built heritage. This is expressed throughout the landscape, as generations have successively shaped the area. It can be seen in field and settlement patterns and their associated hedges, banks and stone walls, the wealth of listed historic buildings and the multitude of archaeological sites and features. The South Dorset Ridgeway is a fine example of this, with a concentration of prehistoric barrows and henges to rival that at Stonehenge and Avebury giving a focus to this ancient landscape.

Industrial activity has also left its mark. Examples of our industrial heritage include traditional stone quarrying in Purbeck, and the thousand-year-old rope industry around Bridport which have shaped the landscape, local architecture and town design.

5.3.1. GEODIVERSITY

Geodiversity can be defined as the variety of geological processes that make and move those landscapes, rocks, minerals, fossils and soils which provide the framework for life on Earth. The geology of the Dorset National Landscape spans some 200 million years of Earth history. Much of West Dorset is formed from Jurassic sediments that record changing marine conditions and contain an exceptional fossil record. Cretaceous chalk and sands lie across the central swathe of the National Landscape covering the Jurassic beds. In the east more recent deposits from the Cenozoic – sands, gravels and clays – overlie the Cretaceous rocks, giving rise to important heathland habitats. In addition to the geology and fossils, the Dorset coast is renowned for its geomorphology and active erosion processes. Key sites and features include Chesil Beach, one of the world's finest barrier beaches; West Dorset's coastal landslides; Horn Park Quarry National Nature Reserve; the fossil forest and dinosaur footprints in Purbeck and the Weymouth anticline and the Purbeck monocline structures. Significant collections at Dorset County Museum, Etches Collection Museum, Lyme Regis Museum and the Charmouth Heritage Centre enable access and understanding.

Many of the rocks and mineral resources are important for the extraction industries; the variety of building stones found in the National Landscape is a major contributor to the local distinctiveness of our settlements.

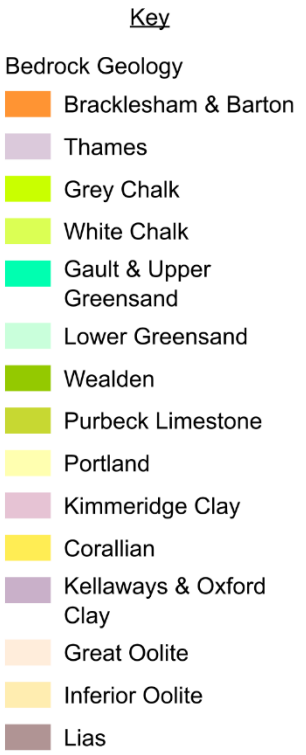


Map 2 solid geology

Geodiversity and natural beauty

Geodiversity underpins the natural beauty for which the National Landscape is designated. The diverse underlying geology and geological/ geomorphological (i.e. landform-related) processes are intrinsic to ecosystem service delivery, influencing soils and hydrology, wildlife habitats, landform, land use and architecture that make up the character and distinctiveness of the landscape. Dorset has an extremely rich geodiversity, most notably recognised through the designation of the coast as part of England's first natural World Heritage Site (WHS). The Dorset and East Devon Coast WHS was selected for its unique exposure of a sequential record through Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods; this diversity is reflected throughout the Dorset National Landscape. The network of inland geological and geomorphological sites represents a valuable but less well-known scientific record of the geology and environmental history of the area and often link to the local stone industry.

Geodiversity contributes to the cultural life of the National Landscape: the Jurassic Coast is a key part of the National Landscape's 'living textbook' special quality, and the qualities of stone for building have long influenced the area's villages, towns and field boundaries.



5.3.2. COAST & SEA

The National Landscape includes approximately 120 miles of coastline, much of which is covered by nature conservation designations. Key marine habitats in the National Landscape are at Chesil Beach and the Fleet, which is the UK's largest tidal lagoon and a marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC); Poole Harbour, the UK's largest lowland natural harbour and a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds; the coast in Purbeck, which is protected as an SPA for its internationally important tern populations; the subtidal rocky reefs adjacent to the coast between Swanage and Portland, and along the Lyme Bay coast, both of which have been designated as Marine SACs; and Kimmeridge where there is a voluntary marine reserve. s. Many important wildlife species depend on both marine and terrestrial habitats for their survival, emphasising the need for integrated management.

Being a coastal National Landscape, Dorset also supports a range of maritime industries and a rich coastal and marine heritage. The main ports along the coast are at Poole and Portland, both just outside the National Landscape boundary. Fishing harbours and anchorages that support the inshore fishing community are located at Lyme, West Bay, Weymouth, Lulworth, Kimmeridge and Chapman's Pool. Coastal resorts provide a link between land and sea where people live, come to visit and carry out the increasing trend of water-based recreation. The South West Coast Path National Trail and King Charles III England Coast Path are significant recreational resources.

The National Landscape's coastline also has significant marine archaeology (see 5.3.3).

Coast, sea and natural beauty

There are unique qualities and challenges associated with the coast and marine environments and activities both within and integrally linked to the Dorset National Landscape. While there is considerable cross over with other special qualities in relation to wildlife, geodiversity, heritage, access and local products, the nature of the National Landscape's coast merits a specific consideration.

The coast and marine environments of the National Landscape are among its most popular and defining characteristics. Our unique World Heritage Site is globally significant, but also one of the most dynamic and changing parts of the National Landscape. Over half of Poole Harbour lies within the National Landscape boundary and habitats along the coast are particularly special due to the maritime influence.
Much of the coastline is within the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site; the National Landscape designation provides the statutory landscape protection for its setting and presentation. There are also two Heritage Coasts within the National Landscape – West Dorset and Purbeck. Heritage Coasts are stretches of largely undeveloped coastline of exceptional or very good scenic quality. While not a statutory designation, they are a material consideration in planning terms and are defined with the aim of protecting their special qualities from development and other pressures. Their statutory protection is delivered through the National Landscape designation where they overlap.

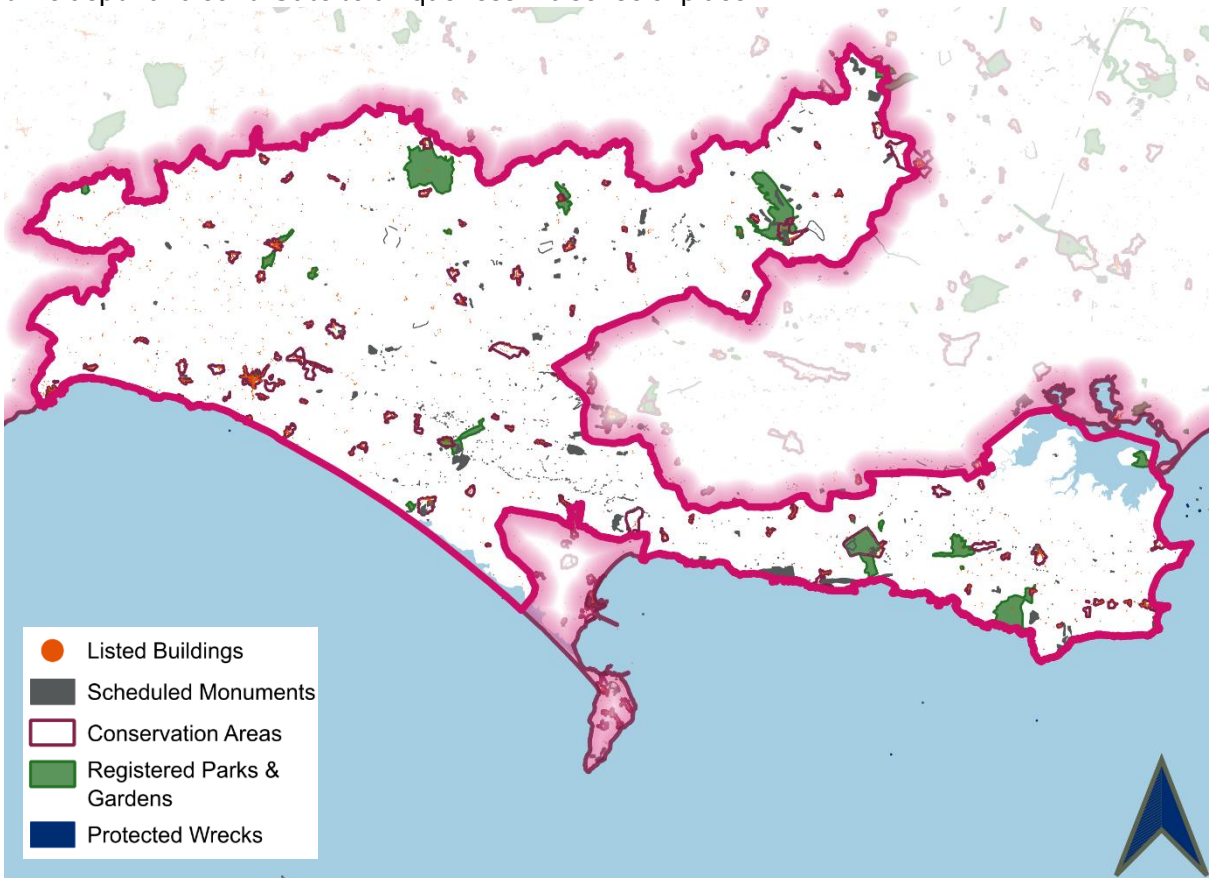
5.3.3. HISTORIC & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Dorset National Landscape has an exceptional wealth of heritage, in particular nationally important prehistoric features that reveal the evolution of the landscape and human history during this period. Its transport, settlement patterns and administrative boundaries have Roman and Saxon origins and its villages and hamlets contain fine historic churches and houses. Underpinned by a complex and diverse geology, the National Landscape contains a wealth of traditional building materials that have helped develop a unique sense of place and time depth to our villages and towns. The settlement patterns are constrained by the surrounding landscape and, along with a range of rural industries such as coppicing and water meadows, have further strengthened the sense of place.
The Dorset National Landscape boasts some of the finest visible archaeological remains in the country, such as Maiden Castle and the extensive Neolithic / Bronze Age ceremonial landscape of the South Dorset Ridgeway. Significant features span all ages, from the Neolithic to the present day, and are visible in the National Landscape's landscape; there is even some evidence of earlier human activity.
The Dorset National Landscape has 542 Scheduled Monuments totalling over 1,150 ha. Also within the National Landscape are 19 registered parks and gardens covering over 2,500 ha (1 Grade I, 9 Grade II*, 9 Grade II), 17 locally important parks and gardens, 89 conservation areas, and 4,009 listed buildings (114 Grade I, 223 Grade II*, 3,672 Grade II).
The Dorset National Landscape also has one of the highest proportions of listed buildings in the country, many of which are thatched, lending a local distinctiveness to most of its settlements. Offshore, there are over 1,700 reported shipwrecks between Lyme Regis and the mouth of Poole Harbour, 270 of which have been located on the seabed. Of these, seven are protected wrecks (of only 57 such sites in English waters) and there are six sites designated under the Protection of Military Remains Act (of only 54 such sites in British waters). Archaeology is under-recorded in the National Landscape, both for specific features, such as historic agricultural buildings and rural industries, and geographically, such as the vales in the west of the area. Woodland archaeology is also under-recorded, both in terms of archaeology beneath woodlands which is hard to survey and archaeology relating to past woodland management, such as sawpits and wood banks.
Significant archaeological collections at the Dorset Museum & Art Gallery, Wareham and Bridport Museums enable access and understanding. In addition, Poole and Portland museums house important maritime collections.

Historic and built environment and natural beauty

The marks of human occupation are integral components of the 'natural' landscape; a record of how people have used the environment and the resources it provides over time. Alongside

giving an insight into the lives of previous occupiers of the landscape, they provide a sense of time depth and contribute to uniqueness in a sense of place.



Map 3 built heritage assets

5.4. A rich legacy of cultural associations…

Over the centuries, Dorset's landscapes have inspired poets, authors, scientists and artists, many of whom have left a rich legacy of cultural associations. The best known of these is Thomas Hardy whose wonderfully evocative descriptions bring an extra dimension and depth of understanding to our appreciation of the Dorset landscape. Other literary figures inspired by Dorset's landscapes include William Barnes, Jane Austen, John Fowles and Kenneth Allsop. Turner, Constable and Paul Nash are just a few of the many artists associated with Dorset, while Gustav Holst captured the character of the Dorset heathlands in his work 'Egdon Heath'. Such cultural associations past, present and future, offer a source of inspiration to us all and may help develop new ways of understanding and managing the National Landscape.

5.4.1. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Dorset National Landscape's landscape quality has inspired numerous renowned visual artists who lived or visited the area in the past. It was in the 19th century with new connections by rail that Dorset began to attract a wealth of artistic talent with JMW Turner and John Constable visiting. Into the 20th century Paul Nash and members of the Bloomsbury group were amongst those producing an abundance of work during this time. There remains a strong body of visual art representing the landscape; the distinctive topography and structure of the landscape unifying very diverse styles of representation as it did with past artists.
There is also a rich heritage of writing inspired by the landscape. Perhaps the best known is the work of Thomas Hardy, who embedded the landscape deeply in his work not only depicting its qualities but also how it shaped the lives of people who lived here. Reverend William Barnes also

captured the essence of the Dorset landscape and dialect in his works, as well as the traditions of rural life; the musician PJ Harvey has more recently produced land-related work in the Dorset dialect. Other writers include Jane Austin, Daniel Defoe, John Fowles and Kenneth Allsop. The writing of Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland was rooted in the Dorset landscape and offers spectacular insights into LGBTQ+ lives from the 1920s to the 1970s.
There is a significant literature collection at Dorset Museum & Art Gallery.
Musical inspiration can be heard in the work of Gustav Holst in his Egdon Heath work and music was a central part of rural life – Thomas Hardy took part in the West Gallery musical tradition here. Materials from the National Landscape have made a significant contribution to artistic work around the world. For example, Purbeck stone was crafted into celebrated decorative work in St Paul's Cathedral and Blenheim Palace by Sir James Thornhill. High profile architectural advances continue at Hooke Park promote contemporary use of natural materials derived from the National Landscape.
The Dorset landscape continues to attract artists, writers and musicians to visit and live, with over 3% employment in the creative industries in Dorset. The landscape provides inspiration and a backdrop for renowned artists and cultural organisations including PJ Harvey, Cape Farewell, Common Ground and John Makepeace. Over 600 artists open their studios during Dorset Art Weeks with Purbeck Art Weeks and other open studio events also very popular. There are also five National Portfolio Organisations funded by Arts Council England in Dorset (Activate Performing Arts, Artsreach, Bridport Art Centre, B-Side, Diverse City); five based in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and two based close to the north at Yeovil. These form a supportive backbone for arts development and strive to provide a rich cultural programme for people who live, work and visit the National Landscape. They have exemplary experience of delivering high quality engaging arts project in the landscape, and these organisations and artists represent a network for partnership projects between artists, producers and the National Landscape.

Cultural landscape and natural beauty

The rich legacy of landscape-inspired work by writers, artists and musicians of the past has been recognised as one of the special qualities of the Dorset National Landscape. The work created by these nationally and internationally renowned figures not only depict landscapes of the past but help us understand more about how people lived and how both landscape and lives have changed over time.
Artistic responses to landscape also help us interact with and be sensitive towards natural beauty in ways which scientific, reductive approaches cannot. It is essential that this experiential element of landscape is recognised, and access to it is enhanced for the benefits it can bring to people's lives. The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, written and spoken word, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better choices and better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future.

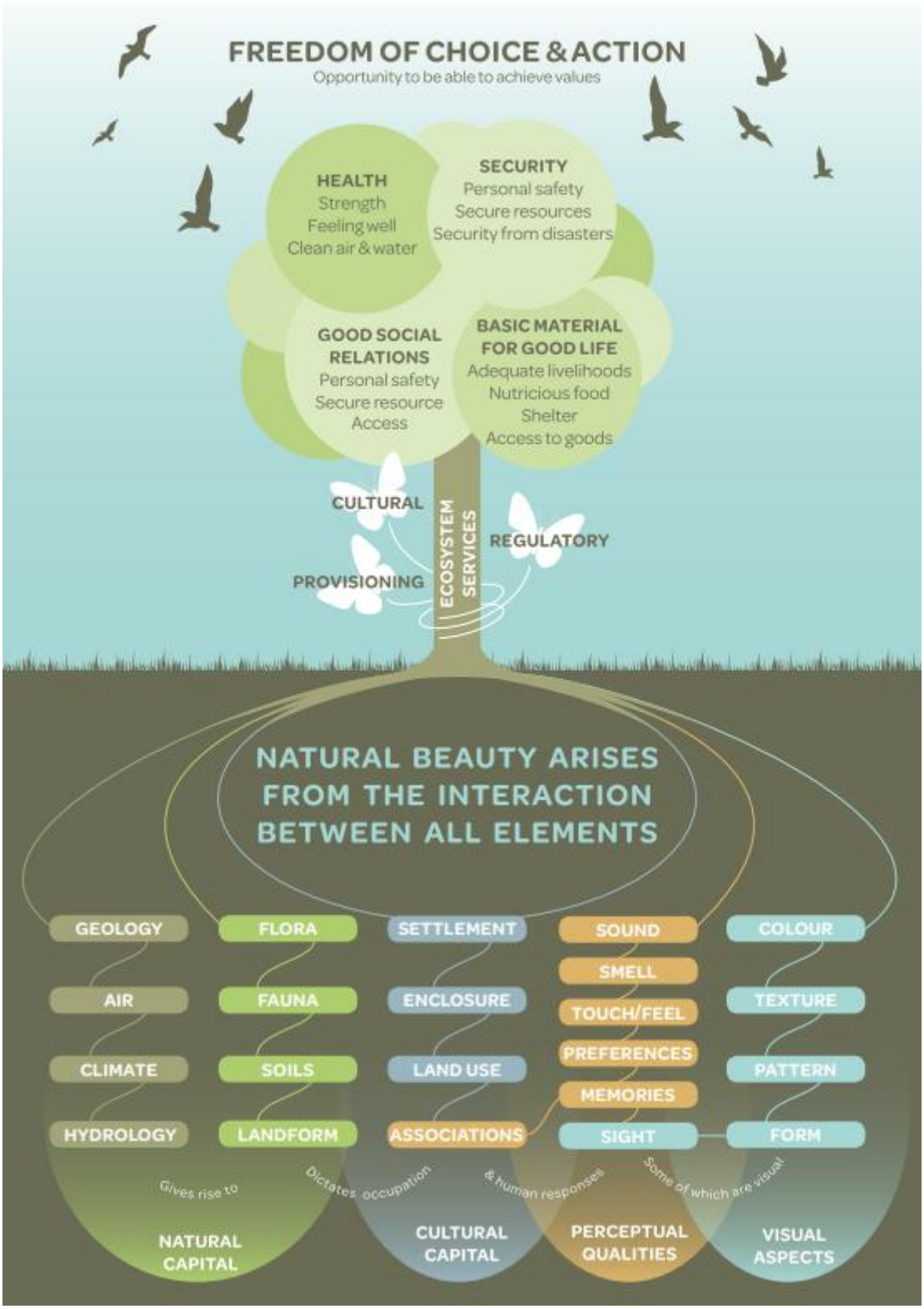


Figure 1 Natural beauty arises from landscape elements which can be described as natural and cultural capital

6. LANDSCAPE & SEASCAPE CHARACTER

This chapter is largely derived from other official sources. It describes the character of defined landscape types, the condition of the landscape and the coastal and seascape character.

6.1. National Character Areas

At a national level, England is divided into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs), large areas that share similar landscape characteristics. The Dorset National Landscape covers NCAs 136 South Purbeck and 139 Marshwood and Powerstock Vales in their entirety, and a significant area of 134 Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase and 138 Weymouth Lowlands. Towards the boundary, the designation overlaps smaller areas of 133 Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour, 135 Dorset Heaths, 140 Yeovil Scarplands and 147 Blackdowns.
Natural England has authored the NCA profiles; each has a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape and outline the ecosystem services it provides and the key drivers for change. These inform Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) designed to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future. The NCA profiles can be viewed at www.gov.uk

6.2. Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the Dorset National Landscape – Conserving Character – was published in 2008 and revised in 2018 (available at www.dorset-nl.org.uk). The Dorset Coast Landscape & Seascape Character Assessment (LSCA) was published in September 2010.
These documents provide an understanding of:

- The qualities and features that make the landscape/seascape special
- How these features combine in different ways in different places to give each area its own unique character
- The strength and condition of these features and how they are changing.

The character assessments for Dorset National Landscape sit alongside and geographically overlap with other assessments, such as those that exist at a county-wide level and the suite of National Character Area (NCA) profiles for England. Consequently, there is some overlap between the content of these broader studies, such as the NCA's statements of environmental opportunities, and out LCA work. Overall, our character assessments offer a finer level of granularity in terms of the character areas that they describe.
In this section we have summarised the key characteristics of the different landscape and seascape types. This provides a spatial framework for management of the National Landscape. The Dorset National Landscape's LCA identifies 14 landscape types, such as open chalk downland, clay vales, limestone hills and rolling wooded pasture. These landscape types share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influence but are not specific to a particular location. The LCA breaks these landscape types into individual and unique geographical areas called landscape character areas, such as the Upper Piddle Valley or Marshwood Vale. The assessment identifies 35 landscape character areas in the National Landscape.
The character and quality of the land and sea interface is an important aspect of the National Landscape, however the coastline is constantly changing, subject to powerful coastal and hydrological processes. The Dorset Coast Landscape and Seascape Assessment is a valuable tool, promoting an integrated approach to decision making in this transitional area. The assessment reflects the terrestrial landscape character types identified in Conserving Character, plus it identifies 11 seascape character types of coast and sea.
It is important to identify and recognise the landscape and seascape character types/areas that lie outside the National Landscape boundary as they contribute to the setting of the area.

6.3. Landscape character types

The following descriptions give a summary of the character or the key characteristics of the landscape and the seascape types that are within or contiguous with the National Landscape boundary.



Map 4 Landscape Type (by colour); individual Landscape Character Areas are labelled.



Open Chalk Downland

The open chalk uplands of the Chaldon Downs, Dorchester Downs and South Dorset Downs form significant areas of the designated area. They are the National Landscape's largest-scale landscapes of simple, rolling open hills and dry valleys with large agricultural estates mainly under arable production. Partly circled by a narrow face of steep escarpments, the open uplands provide the setting for a series of intimate chalk river valleys. There are strong cultural associations with Thomas Hardy.

Chalk Ridge / Escarpment

The North, West and South Escarpments and the Purbeck Ridge form dramatic backdrops to, and give views of, much of the surrounding National Landscape. With an undeveloped and open character, this landscape type with its steep sides supports important patches of chalk grasslands and hanging woodlands.

Chalk Valley & Downland

The distinctive, secluded chalk valleys of the National Landscape drain the surrounding open chalk downlands. Flowing southwards into the larger Stour, Piddle and Frome rivers, each valley has its own unique character and sense of place, with a diversity of important habitats and cultural features.

With traces of old water meadows, distinctive church spires, country houses and characteristic settlements of stone, brick and flint, the chalk valleys display a rich rural cultural heritage.

Clay Valley

The sweeping landscapes of the Kimmeridge Coast, Corfe, and Bride Valleys each have a unique identity. Enclosed by surrounding escarpments and ridges, they generally have a settled rural character with coastal influences. A patchwork of rolling pastures and scattered woodlands have been shaped by centuries of woodland clearance and agricultural improvement. Small farmsteads and nucleated villages with landmark churches are dotted throughout the landscape.

Lowland Heathland

The internationally important lowland heathland landscape of the South Purbeck Heaths, similar to many other heathland landscapes around the Poole Basin, is a complex and diverse mosaic of open dry and wet heath and wooded scrubby heath. A range of land uses affect condition, with the fragile heaths under constant pressures. Remaining heathland patches, many of which are internationally important habitats, are fragmented by significant conifer plantations, with a variety of land uses including mineral extraction and planned farms.

Valley Pasture

The valley pasture landscape type is found along the Rivers Stour and Frome, formed from alluvial deposits. They have wide, open meandering floodplains that historically support transport routes and market towns around the fringes. A series of wet woodlands, large pastures and water meadows are typical of this landscape type.

Limestone Plateau

The Purbeck Plateau is the only limestone plateau in the Dorset National Landscape. It has a simple but striking character represented by its exposed and treeless appearance. A long tradition of stone extraction has left its mark, shaping a near continuous network of stone walls, extraction routes and small quarries dotted across the area. Limestone villages and open grasslands add to the character of this distinct landscape type.

Ridge & Vale

The ridge and vale landscape type covers two character areas to the east and west of Weymouth. Backed by the South Dorset Escarpment, these types are characterised by low lying limestone ridges running east to west, with undulating clay vales of mixed farming and nucleated villages.

Rolling Wooded Pasture

The rolling wooded pasture landscape type is found around the margins of the Dorset Heaths. Although land cover varies, the areas are unified by remnant heathy patches within a well wooded landscape of pastures and dense hedgerows, shaping an intimate and rural landscape. Rempstone has a more agricultural character; towards Lulworth the area has strong parkland character.

Coastal Grassland

Coastal grasslands, as a habitat, are found along much of the immediate coastline. It becomes a landscape type where the characteristic coarse grasses, exposed by the full force of the coast, are backed by the southern escarpment and divide it from the inland landscapes. A lack of development and the sweeping coastal views underpin a natural appearance.

Clay Vale

The clay vale landscape type is represented by the intimate and rural Marshwood, Halstock and Blackmore Vales. They have predominantly small pastoral fields with trimmed hedgerows and hedgerow oaks, patterns of medieval settlement and clearance and a long tradition of dairy farming. Scattered farmsteads underpin the largely undeveloped and tranquil character.

Wooded Hills

Significant areas of the western extent of the National Landscape form the intimate wooded hills landscape type, with several clusters of conical shaped hills formed around the Marshwood Vale. Typically, woodland is found on the valley sides with a network of dense hedgerows, holloways, winding lanes and small clustered settlements dotted throughout the pastoral landscape. The market and coastal towns in and around the area support a long tradition of artistic interpretation of the landscape and local cultural traditions.

Limestone Hills

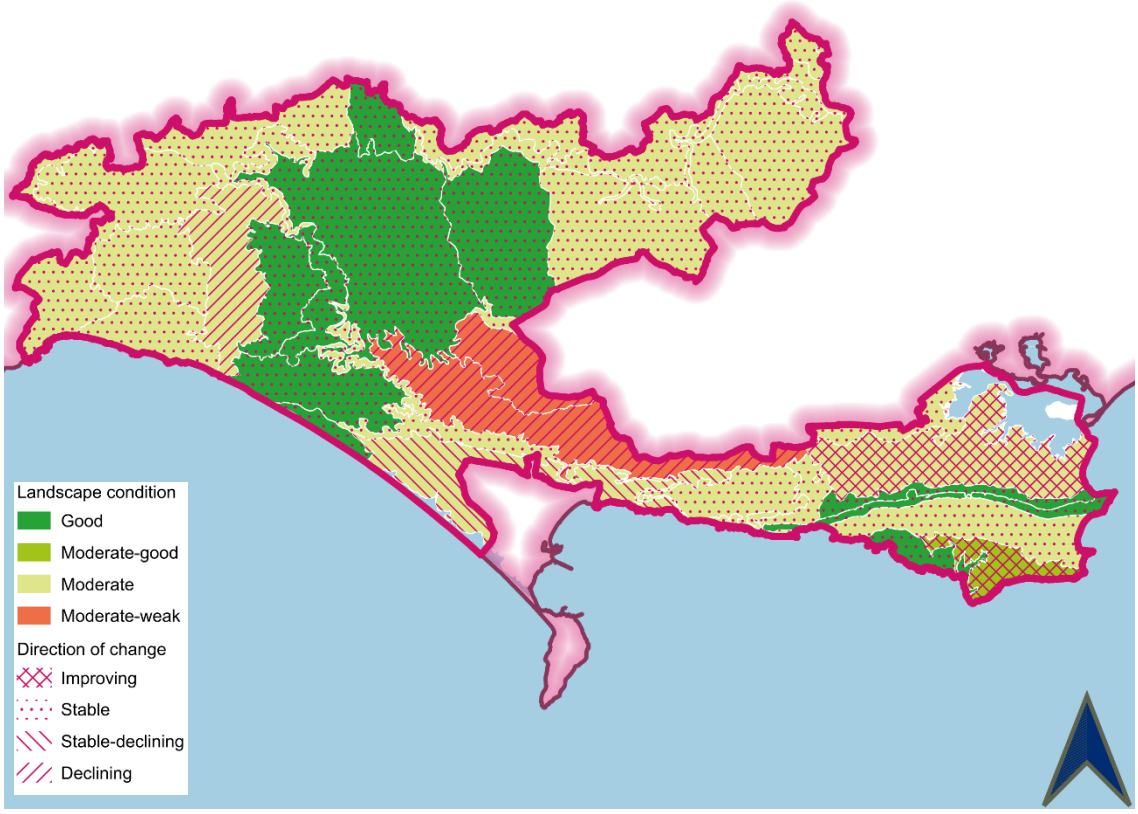
Although found elsewhere around the northern part of the county, the only limestone hill landscape within the National Landscape is found at Melbury Park. Much of the area is dominated by the designed parkland at Melbury with its distinctive, sweeping landscape. Elsewhere, a series of low, rounded limestone hills with dense wooded sides contrast to the broad, clay valleys of pastures, arable fields, winding lanes and springs.

Undulating River Valley

The undulating river valleys of the Brit and Axe are centred on the floodplains and associated surrounding branching valleys and undulating hills. They have a diverse character ranging from open countryside to market towns and villages dotted along the upper terraces. Characteristic features include damp pastures, linear wet woodlands along the valley floor with small broadleaved woodlands dotted around the surrounding hills.

6.4. Landscape condition

Each landscape character area has been assessed in 2018 for its condition and the direction of travel. This assessment helps to prioritise action geographically. More detail can be found in the Dorset National Landscape LCA.



Map 5 Landscape condition

Application of the Management and Planning Guidelines for each character type in the LCA will help address character weaknesses and reverse declining quality.

6.5. Transition to the sea: coastal seascape character types

Sandy Beaches

These predominantly sandy beaches are generally not associated with extensive sand dune systems, except at Studland. They are important recreational beaches, have warm sea temperatures and are important for marine and coastal biodiversity. Coastal defences are present on some beaches.

Shingle Beaches and Spits

Chesil Beach is an impressive example of this type due to its height and extent and is a unique feature on the Dorset coast. These areas have large, often raised shingle beaches and spits. Dominated by shingle, the grain size varies from very fine to large shingle and sometimes mixed with sand. They are often important for protection of cliff bases.

Slumped Cliffs

These are softer rock cliffs, susceptible to erosion and landslips although may be stable for long periods. The softer substrate provides habitat for colonisation of cliffs with vegetation over time. Beaches, usually shingle, protect cliff bases. Significant fossils are often present and they are an important cliff type within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Hard Rock Cliffs

These hard cliffs are variously made of sandstone, chalk or limestone with vertical or near vertical faces and ledges. They are often dramatic, with pinnacles and pillars, and are often

highly visible from long distances - conversely, they also provide significant panoramic viewpoints. They are generally un-vegetated with ledges important for nesting seabirds. While still mobile, in comparison to the slumped cliffs seascape type they are more stable and resistant to erosion. They are also an important cliff type within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Intertidal Rock Ledges

These horizontal rock ledges within the intertidal zone include loose rocks and boulders and experience varying levels of inundation depending on tides and location. They often include important intertidal habitats and are frequently in remote, inaccessible locations.

Natural Harbour

This is the type for Poole Harbour (the world's largest natural harbour), the majority of which lies within the National Landscape boundary. With a distinctive mix of tidal mudflats, marshland, reed bed, open water and shingle bank it has indented and shallow shorelines to the harbour which resemble large lakes. Characterised by a large scale, open, tranquil and generally unspoilt landscape it is of significant conservation value and offers important vistas and views of historic and cultural importance.

Saline Lagoon

The Fleet is the tidal water impounded by Chesil Bank; open to the sea through Portland Harbour. Described as the finest example of a lagoon of its type, it includes a distinctive mix of tidal mudflats, marshland, reed bed, open water and shingle bank, has an indented and shallow shoreline and is of a large scale: open, tranquil and generally unspoilt. As with Poole Harbour, it is internationally important for wildlife and has important vistas and views of historic and cultural importance particularly related to Abbotsbury and the ancient Swannery.

7. POLICY FRAMEWORK

This chapter includes the policy framework setting out how the natural beauty of this area is to be conserved and enhanced.

This Policy Framework sets out our objectives (what we want to achieve) and policies (broadly how we will meet the objectives) for managing the National Landscape to achieve the Vision. The policy framework concentrates on three key areas of interaction with natural beauty and the National Landscape's landscape:

- **A: The Working Landscape**, covering farming, forestry, fishing and conservation land management within the National Landscape.
- **B: Exploring, Understanding and Engaging**, covering access, tourism, recreation and educational use of the National Landscape.
- **C: Planning for Landscape Quality**, covering forward planning, development management and infrastructure.

In addition, there are objectives and policies which refer to the methods by which the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's natural beauty will be best achieved. This is called:

- **D: Ways of Working**

Each chapter includes background information to describe the topic, its significance to the National Landscape and its purposes, and a description of the current pressures and opportunities that relate to the topic.

There is also a description of the organisations with which the National Landscape Partnership works on each topic: this list is not exclusive, and all parties interested in delivery are welcomed.

Policy context

This Management Plan sets out the priorities specifically for the Dorset National Landscape in relation to the purposes of the National Landscape designation. Delivery of the plan will need to address several key challenges which have implications for the National Landscape in coming years, described in Chapter 4.
There are many other plans, strategies and policies that affect the management of the National Landscape. These are presented in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the National Landscape Management Plan and are not repeated within this document.

Action planning

Annual, rolling action plans are drawn up by the National Landscape team. These concentrate on delivery directly by the team and its immediate partners and are available on the National Landscape website. 'Offers' of delivery are welcomed and should be made directly to the National Landscape team manager.

7.1. THE WORKING LANDSCAPE

This chapter is largely focussed on land management, fishing, and the products that come from them. While this is largely farming and forestry for producing food, fibre and fuel, this chapter also encompasses land management for conservation and/or recreational uses. On some sites, these are the primary aims, but even sites managed intensively for food/wood production support a range of wildlife and other ecosystem services.

This chapter also considers fishing as an industry – primarily commercial sea fishing but also freshwater fishing interests; recreational uses are considered in chapter 9.2. The fishing industry holds an important place in the community and identity of coastal parts of the National Landscape.

All these activities are, or have traditionally been, about providing food, drink, wood and fibre and biomass, but there is so much more that a well-managed landscape can provide including reduced flood risk, cleaner air and water alongside conservation 'products' such as increased farmland bird populations or enhanced grassland flora. Accessing 'green finance' to pay for these public goods can provide an important income stream to support sustainable farm businesses. These goods are considered here, particularly as people's consumption choices can influence forms and styles of production.

The National Landscape is largely a farmed landscape with farming occupying 76% and forestry 12%. The number of land holdings in the National Landscape is 991 (down from 1,057 in 2016) and 160 registered fishing boats of under 10m operating from ports within and adjacent to the National Landscape. There are many businesses which operate in the National Landscape which are beneficial for its economy, particularly the green economy. There are relevant policies throughout this plan which should encourage those enterprises.

7.1.1. SIGNIFICANCE

Natural beauty and the National Landscape's special qualities:

- **Landscape & landform**

  Many of the landscape features of today are the result of around 8,000 years of land management choices for food production and human settlement, including the extent and type of woodlands and hedgerows, the presence of grasslands, heathlands, downlands and arable land. To conserve and enhance natural beauty while maintaining food production, the methods by which that food is produced are critical – there is a big opportunity for regenerative approaches.

  In 2024 32% of the National Landscape was covered by environmental stewardship and 58% of woodlands were managed.

- **Wildlife**

  Relatively continuous land management practices for hundreds, even thousands of years, has created the National Landscape's main valued terrestrial habitats. Agricultural intensification (and in some cases, abandonment) over the last century has caused the loss or shrinkage of these. There is a significant coverage of biodiversity designations with 13 Special Areas of Conservation (three of which have marine components) and four Special Protection Areas in the National Landscape (one of which has marine components) plus three Marine Conservation Zones on its boundary. Together with 75 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 679 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, they form the building blocks of a wildlife-rich landscape.

- **Living textbook**

  The National Landscape's history of agricultural occupation has left significant marks in the landscape, from 'Celtic' field systems to vernacular farm buildings and related structures. Many of the National Landscape's villages' historic buildings also relate to an agricultural background.
  In 2025, there were: 4,009 listed buildings (10 at risk); 542 scheduled monuments (83 at risk); 19 registered parks and gardens; a World Heritage Site and ten National Nature Reserves.

- **Cultural legacy**

  Over the centuries, Dorset's landscapes and their management have inspired poets, authors, scientists and artists, many of whom have left a rich legacy of cultural associations.
  Their output is part of the record of rural life, as well as a collection of emotional and artistic responses to the place. Some of Dorset's strong current cultural sector have engaged with land management, in some cases raising questions or making provocations about sustainability, the origins of our food and the artistry inherent in managing the land. There are also rich cultural community events, such as wassailing and Apple Day, which help foster a connection between people and place.

7.1.2. OPPORTUNITIES & PRESSURES

Opportunities

- There are significant opportunities for the Dorset National Landscape Partnership to support delivery of national and regional policy ambitions, including The Environment Improvement Plan, the Land Use Framework, The National Food Strategy, Wilder Forests, The Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Dorset National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan, Catchment Management Plans, Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and the Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Plan. This also includes aligning with evolving and innovative approaches to nature recovery, climate resilience, and sustainable land management.
- Environment Land Management Schemes provide an opportunity to deliver numerous public benefits, particularly as other forms of farm support are phased out. These schemes support regenerative land management while recovering nature, through the creation and restoration of habitats, including grassland, woodland, hedgerow, heath, and wetland. They also mitigate the impacts of climate change, conserve heritage, and reduce the impacts of natural hazards.
- There is scope to expand woodland and forestry, and particularly those that deliver multiple benefits for climate, nature, and people, as well as timber that is produced sensitively, particularly in continuous cover systems. Opportunities also exist to promote agroforestry, and trees outside woodlands. There is opportunity to bring existing woodlands into sensitive active management. All this should lead to increased local materials for construction and fibre.
- Rivers, wetlands, and particularly valley mires and chalk streams, present opportunities for habitat restoration and creation, flood risk management, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem services. Integrated catchment management can help improve water quality and resilience to climate change.
- The Food, Farming & Countryside Commission's Farming for Change research shows that a transition to regenerative farming and agroecology can significantly reduce emissions, support species abundance and maintain food production, growing enough healthy and sustainable food for all. This scenario also ensures we do not export

environmental impacts overseas and provides a broad pathway for resilient and sustainable farm businesses to take responsibility for food security. Regenerative farming is a transformative approach to farming that prioritises restoring soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem services as the foundation of productive and resilient food systems and landscapes.

- Farm systems which prioritise soil health are more resilient to prolonged periods of wet or dry weather as well as contributing more to the drawdown and sequestration of atmospheric carbon; they are in many cases more profitable.
- Farming clusters, both geographic and topic-based cover a large part of this landscape. Clusters enable rich knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer support for a farming transition.
- The Dorset National Landscape can act as a convenor and showcase successful approaches to regenerative land management and nature recovery. Particularly, there is significant opportunity to facilitate delivery of innovative and effective partnerships across catchments, farms, and communities, that support collaborative approaches to regenerative land and water management.
- Dorset Council's County Farm strategy includes support for new entrants and demonstrating sustainable land management.
- Investment in citizen science can further help deliver nature recovery at scale.
- The adoption of a Natural Capital approach, and accessing ethical green finance, can facilitate investment in the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, whilst mitigating the impacts of climate change, nature loss, and nutrient pollution.
- There is potential to support small rural businesses, local food and fibre processing infrastructure, and markets for sustainable products, including wood fuel and building retrofit materials.
- The rise of localism and circular economy approaches can help sustain rural livelihoods and strengthen community resilience.
- Built and human heritage underpins landscape character; conserving it maintains a sense of place and time depth. It also provides many opportunities for engagement to audiences beyond those focussed on nature.
- While some fishing practices such as scallop dredging and bottom trawling can be incredibly destructive of important marine habitats, we already have examples off the Dorset coast which demonstrate the rapid regeneration that can be achieved when these practices are stopped. This regeneration supports good harvestable production as well. We are well placed here to take this to the next level and demonstrate the recovery that a truly sustainable fishing industry might bring about

Pressures

- We are already feeling the impacts of climate change, and it is forecast to get more severe. Without adequate mitigation and adaptation, this will lead to:
    - Sites which are rich in nature currently are likely to remain important locations to allow adaptation of wildlife, whilst in areas where nature is already declining we may see further reduced species diversity and abundance, with forecast changes favouring generalist species over specialists.
    - Ongoing shifts in species ranges, with species able to colonise new areas (further north or in micro-habitats that were previously unsuitable), whilst potentially being lost from areas that become too warm or dry for them. New species are likely to colonise and, as a south coast county, Dorset is one of the first to see continental species arriving.
    - Increased pests and diseases, exacerbated by global trade and climate change.
    - Changing growing conditions requiring land managers to adapt what they grow and how they grow it.

    - Increased storminess, longer dry periods, and extreme weather events leading to greater impact from fires, flooding (coastal, groundwater, and fluvial), and landslides.
    - Sea-level rise, with impacts in low-lying areas such as the shores of Poole Harbour.
    - Impacts on built heritage through erosion, wind damage and water ingress.
    - Socio-economic impacts derived from the direct impact of climate change elsewhere in the UK and abroad.
    - Increased frequency of severe wind and rain events damaging historic buildings and other monuments.
- Shifting political priorities have introduced uncertainty and reduced confidence within the farming sector. Uncertainty is compounded when funding streams close (temporarily or otherwise) without notice and will little information on future plans. Together this could threaten the viability of smaller farms and may lead to land consolidation, reduced workforce, and diminished capacity for conservation-focussed management.
- The Agricultural Transition is putting economic stress on many farming businesses. Equally it opens a greater variety of land management choices many of which compete or are perceived to compete. Intensive food production, novel cropping, biofuel, solar, rewilding and nature are potentially competing land use choices.
- Regulations, and particularly those affecting the use of construction materials, reduces the possibility of innovative local goods and services being utilised, and therefore sustaining the status quo.
- The need for agricultural infrastructure (livestock sheds, slurry lagoons, etc.) risks impacting landscape character if poorly implemented.
- Poor succession planning in farming businesses will lead to fewer, larger agri-businesses and reduced opportunities for new entrants.
- There is a lack of processing infrastructure for meat, timber and fibre, and limited access to capital for new entrants in countryside jobs.
- Poor quality soils, air, and water creates long-term pressures on farm businesses, as the benefits these assets provide has historically been undervalued.
- Historic land management practices, shaped by the need to produce food and sustain livelihoods, have contributed over time to losses in wildlife, pollution of water bodies, and changes in landscape character. .
- Persistent threats from pests and diseases (e.g., Chalara, blue tongue), invasive non-native species (e.g. grey squirrel, sika, muntjac and Rhododendron), other unmanaged species (notably native deer), and biosecurity risks at borders, within supply chains, and nurseries present a risk to native flora and fauna.
- Lack of current data and regular monitoring hampers effective planning and response.
- Most Dorset woodlands are small and form part of wider economic units, making it challenging to operate efficiently.
- Balancing the use of woodland biomass with health impacts from particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$).
- The cost of rural housing makes it hard to enter the land-working sector and could result in a loss of the required skills; it is difficult for new entrants to farming which can stifle innovation brought about by new entrants. This is exacerbated by poor public transport, which limits access to work and training, particularly for young people. The situation is worsened by limited access to capital
- Second homes, pony paddocks, and rising rural housing costs are particularly acute in some areas, impacting the working landscape and local communities.

7.1.3. ORGANISATIONS IMPORTANT TO DELIVERY

Defra, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Historic England, farmers and landowners and their representatives, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW, National Trust, RSPB, Dorset Catchment Partnership, Dorset Coast Forum, Litter Free Dorset, Local Authorities, Dorset Food & Drink, Kingston Maurward College, Dorset Climate Action Network, Dorset Museums Advisory Panel.

7.1.4. OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

OBJECTIVE A1: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURE

Land and sea are managed to support nature recovery, conserve and enhance natural beauty, ecosystems, and the essential benefits they provide, such as clean air, water, and biodiversity. Areas of high and high potential nature value are managed primarily for nature; productive land uses in other areas are undertaken in a way which minimises or reverses environmental harms. Dorset's distinctive geodiversity is protected and celebrated as an integral part of nature and for its role supporting landscape character, scientific understanding, and community engagement for present and future generations.

Policy A1a Deliver landscape-scale nature recovery and habitat connectivity

- Expand and connect habitats across the landscape, restoring grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, heathlands, wetlands and rivers to support species movement and ecosystem resilience, as set out in the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Dorset National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and as required for the Protected Landscape Target and Outcome Framework.
- Manage land and sea at a scale, reinstating natural processes and building ecological dynamism across landscapes managed for nature, to enhance resilience and support long-term nature recovery.
- Implement nature recovery initiatives aligned with the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Dorset National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan.
- Increase the area and quality of sites that meet qualifying criteria for '30 by 30', ensuring effective long-term management in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Support management of non-native invasive species.
- Support citizen science and community monitoring to improve biodiversity data for adaptive management.

Policy A1b Integrate soil, air, and water quality improvements into land management

- Support a just transition to more regenerative or agroecological forms of agriculture which
    - underpin sustainable farm businesses resilient to environmental and economic shocks,
    - recover soil structure for greater infiltration and soil water storage capacity, reducing downstream flood risk and increasing resilience to flood and drought
    - recover soil nutrient cycling to reduce reliance on fertilisers
    - encourage integrated pest management to reduce reliance on pesticides
- Support a just transition towards more regenerative forms of forestry which
    - maintain canopy cover
    - support a wide species diversity with a weighting towards native and climate-resilient tree species
- Support multi-functional land use choices compatible with the purposes of designation.

- Implement low-nitrate and low-ammonia farming practices and incentivise land-use changes to reduce emissions.
- Implement appropriate land management and restore wetlands and peat to improve water quality, reduce nutrient pollution, and lock in carbon.
- Strengthen integrated catchment management partnerships to effectively deliver Catchment Plans, Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans, and other relevant plans and policies.
- Require nutrient offsetting and air quality impact assessments for major rural developments.

Policy A1c Enhance coastal, river and wetland ecosystems for biodiversity and resilience

- Prioritise habitat restoration and managed realignment along coasts to improve resilience to sea-level rise and flooding.
- Expand Marine Protected Areas and protect coastal wetlands to meet biodiversity and climate targets.
- Coordinate sustainable coastal and catchment management via established partnerships

Policy A1d Expand sustainably managed woodlands and greater numbers of trees outside woodlands

- Promote woodland expansion delivering multiple benefits for climate, nature and people, as set out in the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Dorset National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and as required for the Protected Landscape Target and Outcome Framework.
- Encourage sensitive active management of existing woodlands to increase local sustainable timber and fibre supply.
- Promote appropriate tree planting outside woodlands in hedgerows, riparian strips and agroforestry systems with the 'right tree, right place' principle.
- Facilitate local processing infrastructure to support sustainable woodland products.

Policy A1e Protect and promote geodiversity as a core component of nature and the landscape

- Embed geodiversity considerations into local planning policies and landscape-scale initiatives.
- Prioritise conservation and restoration of key geological sites, including quarries and features, and action that works with the dynamic nature of the coastline, and that are aligned with the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan.
- Foster partnerships to raise awareness and engage communities in geodiversity conservation through citizen science and education.

OBJECTIVE A2 CONSERVING AND ENHANCING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

The historic environment and its setting are conserved and enhanced, ensuring its cultural significance is protected for future generations.

Policy A2a Conserve and celebrate Dorset's historic environment

- Work with heritage organisations and landowners to identify, conserve and enhance historic features and landscapes.

- Integrate historic environment considerations into land management and development planning.
- Support interpretation, education and community engagement to celebrate Dorset's cultural heritage.
- Where loss is inevitable (e.g. through coastal erosion), promote recording and celebration.

OBJECTIVE A3 ADAPTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Land and sea management supports natural processes, enabling nature, landscapes and ecosystems to adapt to climate change and other environmental shifts.

Policy A3a Implement nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and resilience

- Restore natural floodplain function, wetlands, and valley mires to enhance carbon sequestration and flood mitigation and drought resilience.
- Develop and implement sector-specific climate adaptation plans (e.g. farming, forestry, tourism) integrated into local planning.
- Promote multi-functional landscapes that include expanded networks of parkland, orchards, agroforestry, and hedgerow along with nature-based solutions to improve resilience.
- Support responsible reintroduction of keystone species that reinstate natural processes.
- Support research and innovation in climate-resilient land management and water efficiency.
- Support communities and businesses to adapt and build resilience to evolving climate impacts, such as stormwater management and heat stress, though nature-based resilience measures.

Policy A3b Support coastal management which promotes natural processes

- Seek opportunities for nature recovery and reinstating natural processes through Shoreline Management Planning.
- Ensure the Outstanding Universal Value of the Dorset & East Devon World Heritage Site is protected

OBJECTIVE A4 BUILDING SKILLS THAT CONSERVE AND ENHANCE NATURAL BEAUTY

Skills in sustainable land management, conservation and the green economy are developed to support resilient communities and ecosystems.

Policy A4a Develop skills and capacity for sustainable land and natural resource management

- Deliver training, apprenticeships and demonstration projects in regenerative agriculture, conservation and green economy skills.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and best practice sharing across sectors and communities.

Support succession planning and attract new entrants into farming, forestry and conservation sectors. **Policy A4b Develop skills and capacity for heritage conservation.**

- Deliver training, apprenticeships and demonstration projects in traditional heritage skills such as dry stone walling, thatching, glazing, carpentry and lime plastering.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and best practice sharing between craftspeople, conservation organisations and communities.
- Encourage new entrants into traditional building and heritage crafts.

- Promote heritage skills as a way of enhancing landscape character, cultural identity, and local employment opportunities.

OBJECTIVE A5 PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE MARKETS

Markets for sustainably produced goods and services are encouraged, supporting local economies while protecting the environment.

Policy A5a Foster markets for sustainable local products, and promote ethical green finance for the rural economy

- Develop markets for locally produced, sustainably managed food, timber, fibre and other natural products.
- Support local processing infrastructure and supply chains to add value to sustainable products.
- Encourage adoption of natural capital approaches and access to ethical green finance for conservation and climate mitigation projects.
- Promote circular economy initiatives including reuse, recycling and use of biodegradable local materials.

7.2. EXPLORING, UNDERSTANDING, ENGAGING

This chapter focuses on supporting local people and visitors to explore, understand and engage with the Dorset National Landscape in a positive and equitable way.

The coast and countryside of the Dorset National Landscape is a popular area for recreation and leisure. While the National Landscape designation carries no statutory purpose to enhance access, the remit is to manage the demand for recreation within the context of the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of nature to people's well-being has been well documented. The Dorset National Landscape's high-quality landscape and heritage makes a substantial contribution to people's nature connectedness and physical health and mental wellbeing, offering opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, relaxation and inspiration. Many people, however, still face barriers to accessing the benefits of this landscape.

Dorset has an extensive public rights of way network of nearly 3,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways. The National Landscape includes 71 miles of the South West Coast Path National Trail (part of the King Charles III England Coast Path) and several other promoted long-distance walking and cycling routes. Walking is the most popular recreational activity nationally and it is the main activity of leisure trips.

Nearly 75,000 people live within the National Landscape boundary, making it one of the most heavily populated National Landscapes in the country – though as the fifth largest National Landscape, it remains sparsely populated in many areas. Local communities have a fundamental role in safeguarding its future; the more people feel a connection to, use and enjoy the landscape, the greater their pride of place and involvement in its protection.

In 2023, there were estimated to be over 10 million day trips to the National Landscape and 5.9 million visitor nights. The landscape underpins our tourism-based economy and supports local services. Tourism supports nearly 10,000 full time equivalent jobs in the National Landscape, with visitor spend contributing £800 million to the local economy (2023 figures). The impact of visitors needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the National Landscape can continue to sustain these benefits for generations to come, while retaining its natural beauty.

The landscape also presents a huge educational resource; it is a popular destination for visiting school trips and students; it is also utilised in local education. Engaging people of all ages in the landscape and its special qualities is an important step in fostering good stewardship.

7.2.1. SIGNIFICANCE

- **Landscape & landform**

  The varied landscape offers a range of experiences for recreation and learning, both inland and along the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The National Landscape includes coastal and market towns, attractive villages and a wide range of natural and cultural heritage assets, with key sites such as Corfe Castle, Studland, Maiden Castle and Durdle Door. Away from these key 'honey-pot' sites, visitors and local communities can experience tranquillity in less well known but equally beautiful countryside and coastal locations.

- **Wildlife**

  The sites managed for wildlife by the National Trust, Natural England, Dorset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Dorset Countryside and others often provide accessible countryside for visitors through provision of car parking, links to public transport and other visitor facilities. Wildlife also provides an inspiration for people to explore and help conserve the landscape. Additionally, there are 6,160 hectares of open, accessible countryside in the National Landscape.

- **Living textbook**

  The National Landscape offers a 'living textbook' for people of all ages to experience, spanning geology, wildlife, human influence and natural processes in the landscape and adjoining marine environment. The landscape is firmly embedded in many educational initiatives in Dorset e.g. a strong Forest Schools network, outdoor education centres and Kingston Maurward College. There are also established networks of adult learning for the large population of active retired such as U3A, village societies and the WI.

- **Cultural legacy**

  The legacy of landscape inspired work by authors, poets, scientists and artists is an important resource that can galvanise an appreciation of landscape and landscape change. The National Landscape today remains a source of inspiration and has a vibrant contemporary arts community, which together with a rich cultural tradition, adds to the quality of life of residents and draws many visitors. The landscape is used effectively as a venue for cultural performance - such as the Inside Out Dorset festival, produced by Activate, as well as many smaller scale local productions. The strong arts community in Dorset also provides a creative way to engage diverse audiences, nurturing a sense of place and communicating complex issues
  Local museums play an important role in preserving and animating significant collections of cultural importance.

7.2.2. OPPORTUNITIES & PRESSURES

Opportunities

- Dorset National Landscape provides outstanding health and wellbeing opportunities through active recreation and nature connectedness, which aligns well with the Our Dorset Working Better Together Strategy priorities, though resourcing at scale is required. Green and blue spaces present opportunities for social prescribing, building on good practice nationally. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan recognises the value of the natural environment for health and wellbeing and the Landscape Review highlights the importance of taking a pro-active approach to widening opportunities to engage with the landscape to underserved communities. Exemplars of good practice are projects such as Flavours, Stepping into Nature and Nature Buddies. Collaborative initiatives between local communities, businesses, environmental & cultural organisations, social media communities & influencers can help reduce the negative impact of tourism in popular areas and spread positive impacts inland.
- Research shows that an emotional connection with nature and landscape leads to more pro-environmental behaviour; artist-led initiatives enable this type of connection. Dorset has a strong arts community, and there are good examples of artist-led approaches to improving the public realm, landscape interpretation, and creative consultation with local communities, all of which could be further developed with additional funding. High-quality cultural programming, including festivals, can help extend the season, reduce pressure at peak times and spread economic benefits throughout the year. Work with the National Landscape Association, endorsed by the Arts Council England Memorandum of Understanding, can bring new and wider opportunities.
- Voluntary codes of conduct for activities such as fossil collecting and coasteering raise understanding of impacts, reduce conflict and pressure and could be extended to include other issues such as inconsiderate use of the working landscape, foraging and kayaking. Increased public awareness of environmental issues could make more people

receptive to communicating landscape issues such as climate and coastal change at a local level.

- The successful Purbeck Goes Wild initiative, providing nature-based opportunities for school-aged young people, provides a useful collaborative model for establishing sustained landscape-focussed engagement with schools and youth organisations in other parts of Dorset.
- With support from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, there is a growing network of farmers and landowners who have the confidence and infrastructure to welcome schools and other groups to learn about food production and nature.
- Volunteering can bring multiple benefits to health, wellbeing and employment prospects but environmental organisations need to remodel volunteer opportunities to be accessible / meet the needs of a wide range of people.
- Promotion of inland walking & cycling routes and public transport can spread visitor economic benefits and reduce the pressure on the coast, though better maintenance and waymarking of some routes would be needed to build a reliable and user-friendly offer. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan will provide a framework for improvement delivery. National Nature Reserves provide enhanced opportunities for access to natural landscapes.
- Roadside boundary signs are a simple but impactful way to raise awareness of the Dorset National Landscape and opportunities for inland recreation could be signposted with traditional 'fingerpost' signs.
- Rationalisation and improved quality of landscape interpretation and safety signage, using JCT interpretation framework for coastal initiatives. There are also opportunities for artist-led approaches including temporary, site specific and permanent interpretative materials.
- Nature connectedness for people who are unable to visit the countryside could be enhanced through high quality, engaging online content.
- Connect with communities close to the National Landscape to maximise health, wellbeing and enjoyment opportunities.

Pressures

- High visitor numbers during peak holiday times often brings congestion and overcrowding to popular coastal sites. Conversely inland areas lack visitors and the associated economic benefits they bring.
- Public transport provision is very limited especially in rural areas away from the coast. People without cars are restricted in their ability to access the wider landscape. Most visits to the countryside are by car, impacting significantly on the environment and local community.
- The rights of way network is fragmented in many parts of the National Landscape, reducing the opportunities for recreation and forcing walkers and riders to use unsafe country roads. In addition, several areas designated as open access are inaccessible from any public right of way.
- Recreation and traffic pressure, from both residents and visitors, is impacting rural road and footpath networks, particularly along the coast.
- A significant number of people don't visit or have access to the National Landscape due to poverty, limited access to transport, rural isolation, lack of confidence, disability and cultural barriers. There is a need to ensure inclusive access to the landscape, promoting equitable enjoyment of natural spaces and supporting health and wellbeing for all communities.
- Climate and coastal change bring an increase in rockfalls, landslips and storm damage and potential danger to people visiting the coast and engaging people in understanding the hazards is challenging.

- Ongoing budget constraints, increasing pressure on funding sources and short-term funding reduce the capacity of organisations to build long term relationships with communities and develop sustainable engagement opportunities.
- Organisational and curriculum changes in schools and budgetary constraints for schools and environmental organisations make it difficult to offer long term landscape-focussed learning with schools.
- Second homes, holiday accommodation and high cost of housing has an impact on communities.
- Environmental volunteering is limited due to time and income pressures.
- Marine and beach litter as well as road litter and fly tipping continue to be detrimental to wildlife and natural beauty.
- There is limited awareness about the National Landscape, the change of name and the work of the Partnership amongst visitors and local people.
- Instagram tourism creates destination sites within the natural environment and bypasses the usual routes of promotion and education that help establish responsible visitor behaviour.

7.2.3. ORGANISATIONS IMPORTANT TO DELIVERY

Many organisations can contribute to delivering these objectives, including (but not limited to) Dorset Council (local highways authority, greenspace & mitigation teams), Dorset Wildlife Trust, RSPB , National Trust, Natural England, , Parish & Town Councils, Dorset Coast Forum including Jurassic Coast, South West Coast Path Association, Dorset Local Access Forum, NFU, The Ramblers, Transport Action Groups, Recreational user groups, Dorset, Litter Free Dorset, Dorset Heaths Partnership, Dorset Local Nature Partnership, Dorset Dogs, Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Visit Dorset, Dorset Race Equality Forum, South West Dorset Multicultural Network Dorset Youth, Activate Performing Arts, Artsreach, Arts Development Company and other cultural partners, museums, galleries, educational institutions, Historic England, , Active Dorset, Public Health Dorset and East Devon National Landscape.

7.2.4. OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

OBJECTIVE B1: ENABLING ENJOYMENT AND ACCESS FOR WELLBEING

Everyone can experience and access Dorset's landscapes, enjoying the health and wellbeing benefits they provide, whether in person or remotely. Opportunities to connect with nature and the countryside are plentiful and accessible, supporting physical and mental health for all, while respecting the special qualities of the National Landscape.

Policy B1a: Expand and improve opportunities for health and wellbeing through access to, and connection with the landscape

- Address barriers to access, particularly for under-represented groups
- Support and develop activities that foster wellbeing by enabling people to strengthen their own connection to nature and the landscape.
- Develop, co-create and support measures to improve access to the coast and countryside for all, ensuring compatibility with the purposes of National Landscape designation.
- Enable remote engagement with the landscape for those unable to visit in person.

OBJECTIVE B2: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ACCESS

Sustainable tourism and access are widely available, supporting local communities while protecting Dorset's natural beauty. Visitor experiences are designed to spread economic

benefits, reduce pressure on sensitive sites, and encourage responsible enjoyment of the landscape.

Policy B2a: Develop and promote sustainable visitor experiences and access

- Develop and support visitor experiences that are compatible with the purposes of National Landscape designation, helping to spread economic benefits and reduce pressure on the busiest areas.
- Engage communities, cultural organisations, and tourism businesses in creating and promoting sustainable visitor experiences, including showcasing local food and drink.
- Improve connectivity and functionality of the public rights of way network, including long-distance routes.
- Promote integrated, sustainable access and public transport options within the National Landscape.
- Support and promote measures to reduce litter - including marine and beach litter - and encourage safe, considerate use of the coast and countryside.
- Support opportunities for organisations providing outdoor activities and nature-based tourism

OBJECTIVE B3: FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS

There is wide awareness and understanding of the Dorset landscape, its special qualities, and the importance of its management. People of all ages and backgrounds are inspired and informed, with opportunities for learning and engagement that celebrate the area's unique character.

Policy B3a: Enhance interpretation and communication about the National Landscape

- Support and develop diverse visitor experiences that showcase and celebrate the special qualities of the National Landscape, reaching wide audiences.
- Rationalise and improve interpretation to enhance the visitor experience, reduce visual clutter, and inform the public about landscape features and safety, especially along the coast.
- Promote understanding of the dynamic nature of the landscape and how it is responding to climate change and other pressures.
- Highlight the significance of the National Landscape designation and the work of the Dorset National Landscape partnership and its wider network.

Policy B3b: Support the use of the National Landscape for life-long learning

- Support initiatives for children and young people to learn about the Dorset National Landscape through outdoor, curricular, and extra-curricular activities.
- Encourage lifelong learning opportunities within the National Landscape.

OBJECTIVE B4: ENGAGING LOCAL PEOPLE IN LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP

Local people are actively engaged in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, cultural heritage, special qualities, and ecosystem benefits of the National Landscape. Community action and volunteering are at the heart of landscape stewardship, fostering a sense of ownership, reciprocity and pride.

Policy B4a: Support and diversify community engagement and stewardship

- Encourage and support parish and town councils, schools, community groups, children and young people, businesses, and individuals to participate in conserving and enhancing the National Landscape.
- Prioritise support to create opportunities for engagement with the landscape for underserved communities.
- Promote sustainable living within communities to reduce local environmental impacts and increase access to environmental benefits.
- Inspire and engage people in monitoring and recording landscape change.
- Support and celebrate local distinctiveness through events and engagement initiatives.

7.3. PLANNING FOR LANDSCAPE QUALITY

There is an obligation for all relevant authorities to seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Dorset National Landscape. To fulfil this, the national importance of the landscape needs to be recognised and reinforced, thereby ensuring that changes within it and its setting achieve the highest standards of sustainability, design and quality.

Development affecting the National Landscape should be compatible with the character and appearance of the designated area and we should also aim to achieve landscape gain from development, wherever possible. This chapter contains objectives and policies that support sustainable development that conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the National Landscape, while minimising impacts to natural processes and ecosystem flows.

The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the overall purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. The Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the beauty of National Landscapes, also recognising that the scale and extent of development within the designated area should be limited and that development in the setting should be carefully sited and designed.

The National Landscape is a living and constantly evolving landscape, the result of human interaction with the natural environment. Sensitively sited and designed development can make a positive contribution to the area, not only in the way it appears in the landscape but also in how it contributes to sustaining local communities and the landscape itself. However, inappropriate development is one of the greatest threats to the National Landscape, if its scale, siting and design are unsympathetic and results in negative impacts upon landscape character, landscape functions, and the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy the landscape.

Most planning decisions in the National Landscape are made by a local planning authority which, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, have a statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of the designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) when discharging this and other functions. As the Government's statutory advisor on landscape, Natural England may provide advice on landscape matters, particularly in response to larger proposals. The National Landscape Team also provides landscape advice through an agreed planning protocol.

7.3.1. SIGNIFICANCE

- **Landscape & landform**

  The physical and perceptual characteristics of a landscape are what makes a place. The National Landscape is valued for its special qualities, which include its undeveloped rural character, exceptional undeveloped coastline, tranquillity and dark night skies. Such landscape attributes need to be maintained for the future, and this is best achieved through development that respects the pattern and character of the places in which it is located.

- **Wildlife**

  When development impacts upon wildlife, the planning system must ensure that these effects are dealt with appropriately, including through avoidance, mitigation and compensation. Ranging from locally important features to internationally significant sites, all habitats within the National Landscape contribute to the area's natural beauty. Avoiding harm and securing mitigation and enhancement measures that are appropriate to site specific considerations and in keeping with landscape character is important within landscape planning.

- **Living textbook**

  The National Landscape contains highly important natural and manmade landscape features that tell us about the past, including our natural history and civilization. Planning

has the potential to both safeguard historical assets and reveal their significance. The ongoing appreciation of these assets relies on their conservation and positive management, as well as measures that improve our interpretation and understanding of them.

- **Cultural legacy**

  Changes to culturally significant landscapes can often evoke deep feelings from those who value them. The planning system and cultural institutions have a key role to play in delivering sensitive change in areas with strong cultural identities, by safeguarding assets and better revealing their significance. This can extend to conserving and enhancing both undeveloped rural landscapes and built environments that contribute to cultural heritage.

7.3.2. OPPORTUNITIES & PRESSURES

Opportunities

- New development and planning gain may provide opportunities to conserve, enhance restore and create valued landscape features. The strengthened duty to seek to further the purpose of National Landscapes may provide further grounds for wider enhancements, potentially through offsetting and compensatory mechanisms, where impacts cannot be avoided or directly mitigated.
- Biodiversity net gain requirements can strengthen and enlarge ecological networks.
- The requirement for developments in the Poole Harbour catchment to be nutrient neutral may provide opportunities for beneficial landscape change and nature recovery.
- The popularity of Dorset as a destination to live and work and the resultant development pressure will create opportunities for securing planning gain.
- There are opportunities to enhance the sustainability and vitality of communities through increased provision of affordable housing in response to recognised local need.
- Emerging techniques in remote sensing and tranquillity modelling provide opportunities for improved monitoring of landscape features and condition.
- Neighbourhood planning provides a tool through which communities can direct growth toward locations that conserve and enhance local character.
- There are opportunities to soften the impact of traffic management schemes within villages through sensitive design measures, such as those contained within the traffic in villages toolkit.
- There are opportunities to improve sustainability through the implementation of small scale-renewable energy projects and community energy initiatives.
- Changes in agriculture may result in opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield countryside sites that can meet existing and novel needs.
- Continued growth in demand for camping and glamping can provide good diversification opportunities, if sensitively designed and located, and there is some potential for cross-subsidisation of nature recovery and regenerative agriculture initiatives.
- Advances in communication technology have the potential to diversify the rural economy.
- Partnerships with artists and cultural organisations may provide creative approach to enhancing the public realm and appreciation of the landscape.
- Longevity and value-for-money in development can be achieved with high quality design and good materials.

Pressures

- Targets relating to housing and climate change:
    - The requirement on Local Planning Authorities to address housing need, which has been increasing, has implications for the potential identification of large-scale housing allocations within the National Landscape and its setting.
    - Net zero targets are driving considerable interest in large-scale renewable energy projects. This coupled with technological advances, increases the potential identification of sites within the National Landscape and its setting for projects such as solar arrays, onshore and offshore wind farms and battery energy storage systems. There may also be associated pressures arising from upgrades to the electrical transmission network that are also related to net zero targets.
- Demographics:
    - An increase in population brings a need for wider infrastructure and service upgrades.
    - Housing stock is not always well aligned with demand, for example in relation to property sizes and the amount of social rented homes.
    - Numerous second homes and informal holiday lets distort the housing market.
    - An ageing population affects the sustainability of some community facilities and services.
- Visitors and recreation:
    - The ability of popular areas to absorb further visitor pressure is finite and requires careful management.
    - Changes to recreational uses within the countryside, including increased activity, which can affect landscape character.
    - Overprovision of visitor accommodation affects levels of residential housing stock.
    - The popularity of some areas, particularly along the coast, brings significant pressure for expansion of camping and caravanning sites in sensitive locations.
    - Glamping can introduce semi-permanent features in sensitive areas.
    - Incremental changes are affecting rural roads, including signage, traffic management and road improvement initiatives.
- Proposed planning reforms could increase risks to natural beauty.
- Ongoing interest in oil and gas extraction within parts of the National Landscape.
- Changes to farming practices include a trend toward an increasing scale of operations with associated landscape and visual effects from farms.
- Improved requirements for the control of pollution from agriculture can result in substantial new infrastructure, such as slurry lagoons and covered silage storage.
- Subdivision of agricultural land can lead to increasingly diffuse agricultural development.
- Growing interest in viticulture and associated development such as wineries can affect both the pattern and character of the landscape.
- Coastal change and its management will result in pressure to defend and/or relocate assets.

7.3.3. ORGANISATIONS IMPORTANT TO DELIVERY

Local Planning, Highway and Flood Authorities, Statutory Undertakers, Natural England, Environment Agency, Marine Management Organisation, Town and Parish Councils, Community Partnerships and Neighbourhood Planning groups.

7.3.4. OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

OBJECTIVE C1: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE AND ITS SETTING THROUGH THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Planning and development processes should seek to conserve and enhance the Dorset National Landscape, ensuring its setting and special qualities are protected for present and future generations. Sensitive siting, high-quality design, and robust management underpin all development, with major proposals subject to rigorous assessment and a strong presumption in favour of conserving and enhancing landscape character. Planning should recognise the character and beauty of the National Landscape, as well as the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services. The benefits of assets such as best and most versatile agricultural land, trees, woodland and other habitats should be conserved and enhanced.

Policy C1a: Development should seek to conserve and enhance the National Landscape

- Support development that conserves and enhances the National Landscape, ensuring.
- Ensure sensitive siting and design that respects local character.
- Only support development that does not conserve and enhance the National Landscape if it is necessary and in the public interest, with major proposals subject to detailed consideration of exceptional circumstances and public interest grounds.
- Encourage the conservation, enhancement, and restoration of characteristic landscape features, seeking net gain for landscape elements both on and off-site.
- Require high standards of design, materials, and workmanship, balancing viability with public benefit and landscape significance.
- Where primary design cannot address landscape and visual effects, require robust secondary mitigation, with consideration for compensation or offsetting for any residual adverse impacts. This reflects the mitigation hierarchy – avoidance, minimisation, restoration, and compensation.
- Require positive contributions to green infrastructure and ecological networks, ensuring all aspects are well-designed and enhance the landscape.
- Ensure full consideration of geodiversity conservation in relevant plans and strategies, recognising links with extraction industries and the built environment.
- Conserve and enhance the coast, maintaining its undeveloped and tranquil nature, and protect the World Heritage Site and its setting, where this coincides with Dorset National Landscape, from individual and cumulative impacts.
- Support natural process-led approaches to coastal management and implement coastal change management objectives.
- Manage the landward and seaward settings to conserve and enhance character, ensuring the assessment of views, noise, and wider environmental impacts.
- Support conservation and enhancement of the coastal and marine environment, including creation of Marine Protected Areas where appropriate.

OBJECTIVE C2: ENSURING EFFECTIVE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

Robust landscape assessment and ongoing monitoring underpin sound planning decisions, ensuring proposals conserve and enhance the National Landscape's character and scenic beauty. Evidence-based decision-making and regular monitoring guide adaptive management and continuous improvement.

Policy C2a: Require high-quality landscape assessment and evidence-based planning

- Assess all proposals affecting the National Landscape to a high standard, with proportionate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and Appraisals in line with industry guidelines.
- Use landscape and seascape character assessment to evaluate effects on the National Landscape's character and appearance.
- Ensure Local and Neighbourhood Plans are underpinned by robust landscape evidence.
- Test proposals against their ability to conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty, giving significant weight to the area's special qualities in planning decisions.
- Refuse proposals harmful to landscape character unless benefits clearly outweigh the protection afforded to the National Landscape; require mitigation, conditions, planning gain, or compensation where residual impacts remain.
- Monitor and assess changes in landscape condition to inform appropriate action.

OBJECTIVE C3: APPROPRIATE, NECESSARY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS SUPPORTED

Essential development that meets community or societal needs and supports the local economy is enabled, provided it is compatible with conserving and enhancing the National Landscape. Such development should be well designed and located, in response to local character and development patterns. Appropriate scale, form, mass and materials will be required. Regard is given to the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities. Sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment are encouraged.

Policy C3a: Enable appropriate interventions that support landscape management

- Support appropriate farm diversification schemes, recognising their role in supporting farm resilience. Recognise potential contributions to conservation, enhancement, and sustainable development of the National Landscape that may be supported through diversification, such as nature recovery and regenerative agriculture.
- Encourage appropriate proposals to restore and reuse of traditional barns and buildings.
- Require minerals extraction to be delivered at appropriate scale and density, with high-quality restoration to benefit landscape, biodiversity, and access.
- Encourage projects that deliver and enable nature recovery, particularly where this would be secured in perpetuity.
- Encourage projects with positive environmental outcomes, such as improvements to the management of water resources for people and agriculture, as well as projects that reduce pollution.

Policy C3b: Enable appropriate development that supports community needs

- Enable affordable and social housing on appropriate rural exception sites that meet proven local need, with locally sensitive design.
- Encourage well-designed projects that reduce traffic impacts.

Policy C3c: Enable appropriate development that supports adaptation to, and mitigation of climate change

- Encourage measures to increase energy efficiency and support renewable energy production of appropriate scale, ensuring compatibility with National Landscape objectives. Large-scale development within the National Landscape and its setting will only be

considered permissible where impacts are limited in extent and severity. Furthermore, projects will be expected to deliver substantive mitigation and enhancement in line with the purpose of the National Landscape, which may include onsite and offsite measures.
- Encourage woodland planting and management proposals that enhance landscape character, biodiversity, connectivity, and public amenity, building resilience to climate change and disease.
- Encourage well-designed and landscape-sensitive green/blue infrastructure, including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and Natural Flood Management (NFM).

OBJECTIVE C4: AVOIDING HARMFUL DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTING SPECIAL QUALITIES

Development that harms the natural beauty, tranquillity, or special qualities of the National Landscape is avoided. Landscape character, biodiversity, dark night skies, and local distinctiveness are protected from inappropriate or excessive development. Where the setting of the Dorset and East Devon Coast WHS overlaps within Dorset National Landscape, protect the presentation and visitor experience of the Site.

Policy C4a: Prevent and mitigate negative impacts of development on landscape and visual character affecting the National Landscape

- Remove existing and avoid creating new features detrimental to landscape character, tranquillity, and special qualities.
- Protect and, where possible, enhance the quality of views into, within, and out of the National Landscape.
- Safeguard the pattern of landscape features, including settlements, that underpin local identity.
- Avoid and reduce cumulative effects that erode landscape character and quality.
- Avoid large-scale or high-density housing and employment development at settlement edges that weakens landscape quality.
- Avoid urbanisation and negative impacts from highway management.
- Conserve and enhance dark night skies and the unlit character of the countryside, avoiding and mitigating impacts from lighting.
- Protect the setting Dorset and East Devon Coast WHS and areas of Heritage Coast that fall within Dorset National Landscape.

Policy C4b: Prevent and mitigate negative impacts of development on nature

- Avoid and reduce impacts on wildlife and habitats, requiring the hierarchy of avoidance, minimisation, restoration, and compensation.. Encourage and support net gain for biodiversity that goes beyond the minimum requirements, ensuring measures conserve and enhance landscape character.

Policy C4c: Limit forms of development with the greatest potential for harm

- Protect the National Landscape from inappropriate and unnecessary forms of major development.
- Require use of previously developed land to limit expansion into sensitive countryside.
- Protect against overprovision of visitor accommodation, especially where it weakens landscape character and increases influence on vulnerable areas, such as the coast.
- Discourage growth in second homes within the National Landscape.

- Resist proliferation of masts and vertical structures, encouraging infrastructure sharing.
- Ensure coastal and flood defences, aquaculture, and fisheries development are compatible with the sensitivity of the undeveloped coastline.
- Require further oil and gas infrastructure to reuse or augment existing sites and contribute to landscape restoration.

7.4. WAYS OF WORKING

This chapter sets out principles by which the National Landscape Partnership operates. Abiding by these principles will encourage coherent, coordinated activity to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the National Landscape and encourage equitable access to them.

7.4.1. SIGNIFICANCE

This chapter relates to the community and organisational environment in and around the Dorset National Landscape, rather than directly to its special qualities and natural beauty.

7.4.2. OPPORTUNITIES & PRESSURES

Opportunities

- The Dorset National Landscape is home to over 76,000 people: this is a considerable potential resource for activity which contributes towards the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- Environmental data provision and curation is supported by strong organisations in Dorset; local datasets are frequently higher quality than national.
- The National Landscape Partnership occupies a position of trust and can act as an 'honest broker' bringing various interests together for project development or information provision.
- The National Landscape team has been building relationships with underserved communities and trusted representative organisations through initiatives such as FLAVOURS, Stepping into Nature and Nature Buddies, and has a strong track record in managing collaborative projects in practical delivery and engagement.
- Exemplar partnerships exist in and across the National Landscape facilitating the delivery of the aims within this management plan. These include Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset Food & Drink, Dorset Cultural Partnership, Dorset Tourism Association, Wild Purbeck Partnership and the Dorset Local Nature Partnership.

Pressures

- Many people experience barriers to getting involved in activities related to their local environment. Barriers are both real and perceptual, both limit the extent to which those people can experience and benefit from the special qualities of this place.
- Financial pressures are forcing Local Authorities to reduce staff numbers, meaning fewer staff cover a larger area; a loss of skills and experience and reduced capacity for engaging in new initiatives.
- Financial pressures on the wider delivery partnership have meant that there is reduced capacity to engage in new partnerships or initiatives; there is also reduced capacity to effectively engage community stakeholders.

7.4.3. ORGANISATIONS IMPORTANT TO DELIVERY

Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils (including the Association for Town and Parish Councils), Catchment Partnerships, community-based environmental organisations (e.g. Dorset Climate Action Network and Planet Purbeck), Community Partnerships, Dorset Environmental Record Centre, Dorset History Centre, Kingston Maurward College, Natural England, National Trust, Dorset Museum and Art Gallery, arts, heritage and culture partners.

7.4.4. OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

OBJECTIVE D1: ENGAGING PEOPLE IN KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

All relevant people are actively involved in key decisions affecting the National Landscape, ensuring that diverse voices shape its future. Inclusive participation and co-creation of initiatives foster lasting positive changes supported by the wider community.

Policy D1a: Support inclusive participation in National Landscape decision-making

- Broaden representation in National Landscape Partnership decision-making, actively including voices from underserved communities.
- Seek to co-design activities with the intended beneficiaries
- Engage with underserved communities, building relationships through trusted intermediaries and co-creating activities.

Policy D1b: Support diversification of the land management sector workforce

- Support activities which facilitate new entrants into farming, forestry, conservation and other nature-based sectors

D2: INFORMING DECISIONS WITH HIGH-QUALITY EVIDENCE AND BEST PRACTICES

Decisions are supported by the best available information, understanding, good practice, tools, and expertise. Robust research, assessment, and conservation practices guide effective management and positive change within the National Landscape.

Policy D2a: Support evidence-based decision-making and conservation practices

- Promote research and deeper understanding of the National Landscape's special qualities, landscape elements, and marine environment.
- Promote the use of landscape and seascape character assessment and mapped Local Nature Recovery Strategy opportunities to shape decisions.
- Promote understanding and application of conservation resources and tools for the natural and historic environment.
- Promote training in, and use of, conservation skills to conserve and enhance landscape character.
- Support the development and use of key information resources, repositories, and their managing organisations.

Policy D2b: Support the landscape approach and an understanding of landscape systems

- Support the understanding of the interconnectedness of landscapes, spaces where natural and human systems interact.
- Seek win-win solutions for people, nature and heritage.

OBJECTIVE D3: MONITORING AND ADAPTING TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL OUTCOMES

Ongoing monitoring informs adaptive management, ensuring that strategies are effective in achieving desired outcomes. Continuous evaluation and adjustment of methods ensure progress towards objectives within the dynamic National Landscape.

Policy D3a: Implement monitoring to inform adaptation and improve outcomes

- Establish and maintain monitoring systems to track progress toward National Landscape Management Plan objectives.
- Regularly review monitoring data to assess the effectiveness of strategies and adapt approaches as needed.
- Share monitoring results with stakeholders to promote transparency and collaboration.
- Use monitoring data to inform future planning and decision-making processes.

Policy D3b: Engage local people in monitoring their environments

- Support citizen science engagement and the activities and tools that support it, such as volunteer coordination, training and equipment.

OBJECTIVE D4: DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE WORKING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships across sectors enable effective delivery of National Landscape objectives, maximising resources and expertise. Collaborative approaches foster innovation, shared ownership, and sustainable outcomes for the landscape and its communities.

Policy D4a: Foster partnerships for effective landscape management and community engagement

- Develop and strengthen partnerships between public, private, and voluntary sectors to deliver National Landscape objectives.
- Coordinate activities across organisational boundaries to achieve integrated landscape management.
- Share resources, knowledge, and expertise to maximise impact and efficiency.
- Support community-led initiatives that contribute to National Landscape objectives.
- Support cultural initiatives that contribute to National Landscape objectives.

8. DELIVERY

This chapter describes the partnership's priorities, both geographic and thematic and how the impact of work will be monitored and how this related to national targets

This is an aspirational plan which requires the combined effort and resources of a wide range of partners as well as a supportive national legal and policy framework. The National Landscape Partnership acknowledge that conserving and enhancing natural beauty is not a central remit for many of these partners but assert that investment in delivery has returns for the environment, the community and for sustainable businesses.
Over the next 5 years, the National Landscape Partnership will produce an annual business plan with a time horizon beyond the year of the plan to ensure multi-year activities are supported. This will be primarily for those resources within its direct control. However, where partners view the value of their work's endorsement by inclusion within this annual plan, it will be welcomed.

8.1. PRIORITIES

The Partnership's team will prioritise its core responsibilities:

- Provision of high-quality advice on strategic planning, development management and agri-environment delivery.
- Securing additional resources to implement programmes of delivery which meet the objectives of this plan, including green finance.
- Promoting this plan, its vision and objectives to secure support for delivery.
- Supporting critical partnerships and projects that help deliver this plan's purposes.

In addition to its core roles, the National Landscape Partnership's team will prioritise the following areas of project activity:

8.1.1. THEMATIC

- Establishing an effective nature recovery network, including support for nature-friendly and regenerative forms of farming and forestry.
- Supporting climate change adaptation and the journey towards net zero
- Supporting activities which help a wide range people to connect with nature and the natural landscape, prioritising effort for those that face the most significant barriers.

8.1.2. AREA-BASED

- A landscape-scale project conserving natural and cultural landscape heritage, extent to be determined after a robust development phase; the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Landscape Connections programme is a likely support mechanism.
- Leading the catchment-based approach in the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams catchment
- Landscape enhancements across the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area by convening and chairing its partnership, seeking Landscape Recovery funding and working towards a new National Nature Reserve declaration on the Purbeck Coast.
- Visitor management and visitor experience enhancement across the Jurassic Coast and using that expertise to develop greater inland opportunities.

The Partnership will remain flexible enough to support, shape or lead relevant opportunities to deliver this policy framework where they arise.

8.2. MONITORING IMPACT

It is important that the Partnership is aware of the effects of its work and the background trends in this landscape to be able to adapt management in terms of geographic targeting and thematic approaches. It is also important that the collective impact of the work of the National Landscape Family is reported to Government, in order to provide ministers with information to justify continuation of their support.

8.2.1. PROTECTED LANDSCAPE TARGETS AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Set by government in January 2024, these are key Environmental Improvement Plan targets "to motivate more activity [within protected landscapes] on the components needed to ensure wildlife can thrive". These are targets for everyone engaged in activity in protected landscapes, not solely for the Protected Landscape organisations. Delivery towards achieving them is contingent on an adequate supply of resources to enable change. Resources for achieving these outcomes may be public funds (e.g. agri-environment schemes), private funds via novel green finance solutions, or incorporated into development schemes by statutory undertakers (e.g. habitat creation related to new water treatment infrastructure).

Thriving plants and wildlife:

- Target 1: Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline). In Dorset National Landscape this equates to 11,506 hectares
- Target 2: Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
- Target 3: For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- Target 4: Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
- Target 5: Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change:

- Target 6: Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
- Target 7: Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.

Target 8: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline). In Dorset National Landscape this equates to an additional 9,414 hectares. In support of these targets, the Dorset National Landscape Partnership will:

- a plan and begin delivering activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work towards creating a Net Zero Roadmap.

Create a Climate Change Adaptation Plan and an associated funnel of activities that begin to address the risks and opportunities from climate change.

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment targets:

- Target 9 Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
- Target 10: Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

The Dorset National Landscape baseline is described in the State of the National Landscape report; movement towards achieving the outcomes will be reported annually using the national indicator dataset.

8.2.2. LOCAL INDICATORS

31 national statistical data sets, including five that directly contribute to the Government's Environment Improvement Plan, are used to monitor progress. These are set out in the State of the Dorset National Landscape report. These data have been used to inform our Strategic Environmental Assessment, which accompanies this plan.

THE DORSET NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

The National Landscape Partnership Board includes representation from:

- Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils
- Dorset Council
- Dorset Local Access Forum
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society
- Dorset Race Equality Council
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Country Land & Business Association
- Devon County Council
- East Devon District Council
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- National Farmers' Union
- National Trust
- Natural England
- Somerset Council

Maps in this document use data derived from Ordnance Survey
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Appendix 2: Accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations for the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	**Impact**
Energy	major positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	major positive impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	**Impact**
Grow our economy	minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	minor positive impact

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	**Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?**
Energy	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Not applicable for this strategy
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	

Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the Dorset Council style guide and also use the accessibility checker to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council website

Before completing this form, please refer to the supporting guidance. The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the Diversity & Inclusion Officer.

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Dorset National Landscape (area of outstanding natural beauty) Management Plan 2026-2031

2. This is a:

Review of a policy document

3. Is this internal / external?:

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The primary purpose of the National Landscape (area of outstanding natural beauty) designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the social and economic needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

The National Landscape Management Plan sets out the policies and actions required by statutory undertakers and others to meet this primary purpose and fulfil statutory requirements for this nationally important protected landscape which covers 42% of Dorset.

We consider our primary audience as people who live and/or work in the Dorset National Landscape (DNL) as well as those who visit.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal:

This will be the 5th edition of this plan (not counting a ‘one-page plan’ that extended the 2019-2024 policies for the calendar year 2025). During the lifespan of the previous plan, the government sponsored Landscapes Review was published (the Glover Review) which made several recommendations. Most of these were to government, but the review also highlighted the lack of diversity in governance, engaged audience and activities. With other National Landscape colleagues, the Dorset National Landscape partnership and team has continued efforts to address this challenge.

Partners were consulted in March-May while conducting a data review; this informed the re-drafting process. Once approved by the National Landscape Partnership Board, we will launch an open public consultation (July-Sept) during which we will make efforts to seek responses from underserved communities.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

National data: the strategic assessment of the landscape has been updated using the best available national data. Census data was used to provide a baseline of the landscape's local audience.

Local intelligence: in addition, local intelligence was gathered using Review Groups and Annual Forums, together with data collected for the Strategic Environmental Assessment to draft the Management Plan.

7. What did this tell you?

In parallel to the Management Plan development, a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform and shape the Management Plan, providing the tools for an environmental, economic and social audit to be used at appropriate stages of the Plan process. As part of the SEA scoping process, it was important to have a clear picture of the current and future state of the National Landscape. The range and sources of information gathered to do so can be seen in Section 5 of the SEA. You can find the SEA on the Dorset National Landscape website.

Indicators were used to highlight trends, which for the 'people' elements of the Plan included:

- Human health & wellbeing
- Access & transport
- Education, training & skills
- Economy
- Access to ecosystem services

Using these indicators, the most relevant issues to the purpose of the National Landscape and those showing the most negative absolute figures or trends were judged to be:

- Health & wellbeing: predicted increase in dementia associated with an aging population
- Health & wellbeing: Overweight children and adults
- Access & transport: pockets of extreme rural isolation
- Education, training & skills: pockets of low skills development in young people

We therefore ensured these were covered within the relevant policy framework of the Plan or will be used as priorities in delivery.

In terms of accessing the landscape and its benefits, underserved communities have been also been assessed as:

- Youth and older people
- Refugee communities and those of the global majority
- Rurally isolated people
- People living with long term health conditions and their carers
- People experiencing socio-economic deprivation

The criteria in the Strategic Environment Assessment were extended to include social criteria, based on Natural England, Ecosystem Knowledge Network and Natural Capital Committee guidance. These were:

- Reduce consumption and minimise waste.
- Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment and encourage enjoyment of it.
- Reduce health inequality and improve wellbeing of the population

- Improve sustainable travel, access and transport options for all
- Raise standards of education and training and promote employment skills
- Improve opportunities for economic activity that enhance natural and societal capital.
- Enable fair and equitable access to ecosystem services.

Once the Objectives and Policies of the Management Plan were drafted, these extended criteria were applied to all Objectives and Policies in the Management Plan to identify which could have a negative, neutral or positive impact. All policy interactions related to the indicators above – specifically where they relate to people, rather than the environmental assets themselves – were neutral or positive.

The majority of the Objectives and Policies within the Management Plan will have a positive impact on all people that live and work in and visit the Dorset National Landscape. This is twofold: on one hand by enhancing the environmental assets and reducing environmental risks (eg flooding or wildfire), on the other by increasing the equitability of access to those environmental benefits. Some policies and the supporting actions described specifically target benefits towards underserved communities.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Pre-drafting: targeted community consultation: the DNL team invested a significant amount of time to ensure gathering of good local intelligence on local issues and opportunities through 3 Annual Forums in Blandford, Bridport and Wareham (November ’24) which were aimed at Parish & Town Councils and place-based community groups; this was an initial consultation.

In March-May, the team convened ‘expert review groups’ with a dual task. Firstly, to understand the current forces for change – both opportunities and pressures that impact on the policy framework and implementation of the Management Plan. Secondly, to comment on the existing plan’s strengths and weaknesses. These expert review groups bought together partners and specialists in relevant topic areas eg access, health & wellbeing, and learning, as well as land management, heritage conservation, etc. They included the steering groups for FLAVOURS (our project aiming to reduce barriers to accessing the countryside for Dorset’s refugees and ethnically diverse communities) and NATURE BUDDIES (our project aiming enhance access to the countryside for people experiencing barriers for health reasons).

During this time Dorset Council’s EDI Engagement Panel was also consulted; advice received has flowed into policy drafting.

Public consultation on a draft plan: the plan was subject to a public consultation from July to September, using Dorset Council’s consultations portal. This was widely publicised (open communication) as well as promoted by targeted communications with community leaders from the communities engaged by the Dorset Race Equality Council, who are represented on the National Landscape Partnership Board.

140 responses were made; elements of the plan have been adjusted according to information received.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

We believe this process has been thorough and adequately informative.

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqIA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqIA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require a EqIA because (provide details):

We believe this plan should be subject to an EqIA.

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

The standard table has been replaced by a policy matrix at the end of this document. This shows where the policy or objective has no impact (=) or a positive effect (+); where emboldened this shows it has a more significant impact. No negative impacts have been assessed.

Impact summary

Most policy impacts have been identified as neutral with some minor positives. One area of the plan delivers stronger positive interactions. Reasoning as follows:

A new section on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at 4.3.3 states:

The Equality Act (2010) has underpinned a movement towards greater levels of equality, although many parts of society still experience discrimination. Historically underserved communities in the Dorset National Landscape are minority ethnic and refugee communities, young people and those on low incomes. In addition, it is recognised that additional efforts need to be made by the partnership to include people living with long-term health conditions and their carers, and those experiencing rural isolation.

The Landscapes Review (2019) highlighted the real and perceived barriers to accessing the countryside faced by many people, particularly those from the global majority, disabled and/or with low incomes. The review also remarked upon the lack of diversity in the land management sector and in the governance of protected landscapes.

A lack of diversity in audiences engaged in protected landscapes limits national representation in these national assets, the potential supporter base, and risks creating a culture of exclusivity.

Objective B1 is worded as follows:

OBJECTIVE B1: ENABLING ENJOYMENT AND ACCESS FOR WELLBEING

Everyone can experience and access Dorset's landscapes, enjoying the health and wellbeing benefits they provide, whether in person or remotely. Opportunities to connect with nature and the countryside are plentiful and accessible, supporting physical and mental health for all, while respecting the special qualities of the National Landscape

Policy B1a is also targeted 'for all':

Policy B1a: Expand and improve opportunities for health and wellbeing through connection with the landscape

·Support and develop activities that foster wellbeing by strengthening people's connection to nature and the landscape.

·Develop and support measures to improve access to the coast and countryside for all, ensuring compatibility with the purposes of National Landscape designation.

·Enable remote engagement with the landscape for those unable to visit in person.

Policy B3b is specifically inclusive in terms of age:

Policy B3b: Support the use of the National Landscape for life-long learning

·Support initiatives for children and young people to learn about the Dorset National Landscape through outdoor, curricular, and extra-curricular activities.

·Encourage lifelong learning opportunities within the National Landscape.

Policy B4a promotes diversity:

Policy B4a: Support and diversify community engagement and stewardship

Objective D1 is an overarching policy statement on methods in delivery and is deliberately inclusive:

OBJECTIVE D1: ENGAGING PEOPLE IN KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

All relevant people are actively involved in key decisions affecting the National Landscape, ensuring that diverse voices shape its future. Inclusive participation and co-creation of initiatives foster lasting positive changes supported by the wider community.

Policy D1a: Support inclusive participation in National Landscape decision-making

·Broaden representation in National Landscape Partnership decision-making, actively including voices from underserved communities.

·Seek to co-design activities with the intended beneficiaries

·Engage with underserved communities, building relationships through trusted intermediaries and co-creating activities.

Policy D1b: Support diversification of the land management sector workforce

·Support activities which facilitate new entrants into farming, forestry, conservation and other nature-based sectors

In addition, the following positive changes have been made from the previous Management Plan:

1. Terminology and Framing

·The 2026–2031 plan consistently uses the term "National Landscape" instead of "AONB," aligning with national rebranding and a more inclusive framing of these protected landscapes.

·The new plan explicitly references "underserved communities", "inclusive access", and "equity", which were largely absent or implicit in the 2019–2024 plan.

2. New EDI-Specific Content

·Section 3.4 includes reference to Stepping into Nature, Nature Buddies and FLAVOURS as successful projects specifically engaging with people who face barriers to accessing the protected landscape.

·Section 4.3.3 (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) is entirely new in the 2026–2031 plan. It:

Acknowledges the Equality Act 2010.

Identifies minority ethnic and refugee communities, young people, and those on low incomes as historically underserved in Dorset.

References the Landscapes Review (2019) and its findings on barriers to access and lack of diversity in governance and the land management sector.

Recognises the risk of exclusivity in protected landscapes if diversity is not addressed.

3. Governance and Representation

·The 2026–2031 plan includes a new policy (D1a) to:

Broaden representation in decision-making.

Co-design activities with intended beneficiaries.

Engage underserved communities through trusted intermediaries.

·The Partnership Board now includes the Dorset Race Equality Council, which was not listed in the 2019–2024 plan.

4. Access and Inclusion Policies

·Objective B1 in the new plan is more explicit about inclusive access:

“Everyone can experience and access Dorset’s landscapes… whether in person or remotely.”

Includes remote engagement for those unable to visit.

·Policy B4a promotes diversified volunteering and community engagement with a focus on inclusion.

Objective D1 and its related policies are explicitly about inclusive participation in relevant decision-making, and diversification within the land management sector.

5. Representation

·The 2026–2031 plan expands cultural references to include:

Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland, highlighting LGBTQ+ heritage.

Acknowledges the role of museums and galleries in preserving diverse cultural narratives.

Mentions Nature Calling, a national project engaging underserved communities through creative commissions.

Summary by Key Topic Areas

1. Recognition of Inequality

The new plan explicitly acknowledges structural and historical inequalities in access to landscapes and participation in their management.

2. Inclusive Governance

Commitment to diversifying the Partnership Board and decision-making processes.

3. Access for All

Stronger emphasis on physical and digital accessibility, inclusive infrastructure, and targeted engagement.

4. Cultural Inclusion

Broader representation of cultural narratives, including minority and LGBTQ+ voices.

5. Community Co-Design and Participation

Policies now support co-creation of initiatives with underserved communities and promote inclusive volunteering.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

While this policy plan does not have an action plan directly associated with it, an annual business plan is developed for the Dorset National Landscape Team. This is presented for approval by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board, which makes its assessment based on delivery of policies within the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Maintain EDI effort & relationships	Maintain relationships developed through exemplar projects such as FLAVOURS, Nature Buddies & Nature Calling.	Tom Munro Sue Dampney	26-27 business plan will be confirmed in Jan '26
Develop funding to support EDI action	The team has committed to developing a bid to Landscape Connections, National Lottery Heritage Fund's flagship grant programme for Protected Landscapes. Enabling access to, and connection with, the National Landscape, prioritised towards typically underserved communities, is a priority to build into this bid. The bid itself would be subject to EqIA.	Tom Munro Sue Dampney Ian Rees	Target submission date May '26

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Tom Munro

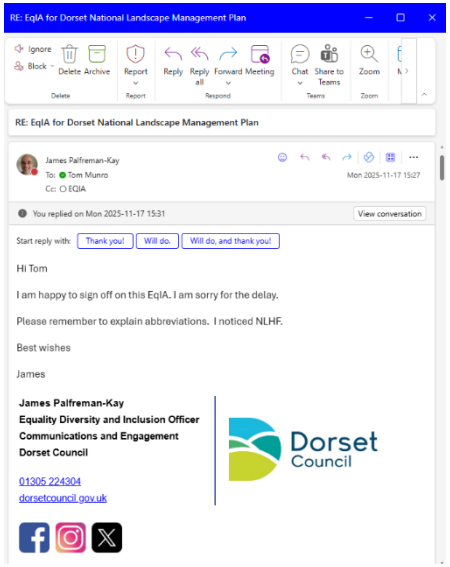
Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Sue Dampney, Sally King, Ian Rees

Date of completion: 17-10-2025

Version Number:

EqIA review date: 17-11-2025

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay


RE: EqIA for Dorset National Landscape Management Plan

RE: EqIA for Dorset National Landscape Management Plan

James Palfreman-Kay
To: Tom Munro
Cc: EQIA
Mon 2025-11-17 15:27

You replied on Mon 2025-11-17 15:31 View conversation

Start reply with: Thank you! Will do. Will do, and thank you!

Hi Tom

I am happy to sign off on this EqIA. I am sorry for the delay.

Please remember to explain abbreviations. I noticed NLHF.

Best wishes

James

James Palfreman-Kay
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer
Communications and Engagement
Dorset Council

01305 224304
dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Dorset Council

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Diversity and Inclusion Officer

POLICY MATRIX: This shows where the policy or objective has no impact (=) or a positive effect (+); where emboldened this shows it has a more significant impact.

2026-2031 Dorset National Landscape Management Plan policies and objectives	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Marriage or civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race and Ethnicity	Religion and belief	Sex (consider men and women)	Sexual orientation	People with caring responsibilities	Rural isolation	Socio-economic deprivation	Single parents	Armed forces communities
OBJECTIVE A1: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURE														
Policy A1a Deliver landscape-scale nature recovery and habitat connectivity	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy A1b Integrate soil, air, and water quality improvements into land management	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy A1c Enhance coastal, river and wetland ecosystems for biodiversity and resilience	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy A1d Expand sustainably managed woodlands and greater numbers of trees outside woodlands	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy A1e Protect and promote geodiversity as a core component of nature and the landscape	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE A2: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES														
Policy A2a Conserve and celebrate Dorset's historic environment	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE A3: ADAPTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE														
Policy A3a Implement nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and resilience	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

2026-2031 Dorset National Landscape Management Plan policies and objectives	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Marriage or civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race and Ethnicity	Religion and belief	Sex (consider men and women)	Sexual orientation	People with caring responsibilities	Rural isolation	Socio-economic deprivation	Single parents	Armed forces communities
Policy A3b Support coastal management which promotes natural processes	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE A4: BUIDLING SKILLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE														
Policy A4a Develop skills and capacity for sustainable land and natural resource management	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy A4b Develop skills and capacity for heritage conservation.	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE A5: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE MARKETS														
Policy A5a Foster markets for sustainable local products, and promote ethical green finance for the rural economy	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE B1: ENABLING ENJOYMENT AND ACCESS FOR WELLBEING														
Policy B1a: Expand and improve opportunities for health and wellbeing through connection with the landscape	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
OBJECTIVE B2: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ACCESS														
Policy B2a: Develop and promote sustainable visitor experiences and access	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE B3: FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS														

2026-2031 Dorset National Landscape Management Plan policies and objectives	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Marriage or civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race and Ethnicity	Religion and belief	Sex (consider men and women)	Sexual orientation	People with caring responsibilities	Rural isolation	Socio-economic deprivation	Single parents	Armed forces communities
Policy B3a: Enhance interpretation and communication about the National Landscape	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy B3b: Support the use of the National Landscape for life-long learning	+	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE B4: ENGAGING LOCAL PEOPLE IN LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP														
Policy B4a: Support and diversify community engagement and stewardship	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
OBJECTIVE C1: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE AND ITS SETTING THROUGH PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT														
Policy C1a: Support development that conserves and enhances the National Landscape	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE C2: ENSURING EFFECTIVE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING														
Policy C2a: Require high-quality landscape assessment and evidence-based planning	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE C3: SUPPORTING NECESSARY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT														
Policy C3a: Enable appropriate development that supports landscape management	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy C3b: Enable appropriate development that supports community needs	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

2026-2031 Dorset National Landscape Management Plan policies and objectives	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Marriage or civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race and Ethnicity	Religion and belief	Sex (consider men and women)	Sexual orientation	People with caring responsibilities	Rural isolation	Socio-economic deprivation	Single parents	Armed forces communities
Policy C3c: Enable appropriate development that supports adaptation to, and mitigation of climate change	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE C4: AVOIDING HARMFUL DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTING SPECIAL QUALITIES														
Policy C4a: Prevent and mitigate negative impacts of development on landscape and visual character affecting the National Landscape	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy C4b: Prevent and mitigate negative impacts of development on nature	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy C4c: Limit forms of development with the greatest potential for harm	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE D1: ENGAGING PEOPLE IN KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE														
Policy D1a: Support inclusive participation in National Landscape decision-making	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Policy D1b: Support diversification in the land management sector workforce	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
OBJECTIVE D2: INFORMING DECISIONS WITH HIGH-QUALITY EVIDENCE AND BEST PRACTICES														
Policy D2a: Support evidence-based decision-making and conservation practices	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy D2b: Support the landscape approach and an understanding of landscape systems	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

2026-2031 Dorset National Landscape Management Plan policies and objectives	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Marriage or civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race and Ethnicity	Religion and belief	Sex (consider men and women)	Sexual orientation	People with caring responsibilities	Rural isolation	Socio-economic deprivation	Single parents	Armed forces communities
OBJECTIVE D3: MONITORING AND ADAPTING TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL OUTCOMES														
Policy D3a: Implement monitoring to inform adaptation and improve outcomes	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Policy D3b: Engage local people in monitoring their environments	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
OBJECTIVE D4: DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE WORKING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS														
Policy D4a: Foster partnerships for effective landscape management	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

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Cabinet

9 December 2025

Adoption of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s):
All those whose wards are within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Executive Director:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning
Email: hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1.1 Dorset Council is required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and publish a management plan for any and all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that fall wholly or partially within its area. Whilst the legislation remains unchanged and refers to AONB these protected landscapes are now more generally referred to as National Landscapes following national rebranding in 2023. There are two National Landscapes in the Dorset Council area, the Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Dorset Council has member and officer representation on both Partnership Boards and hosts the Dorset National Landscape team. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape team is hosted by Wiltshire Council.

1.2 Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new duty on relevant authorities in relation to management plans. For National Landscapes, this is enacted through Section 90A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This legal requirement is known as the ‘seek to

further' duty. It is now a legal requirement for 'relevant authorities', including all public bodies, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the national landscapes. This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions relating to or affecting land in the National Landscape areas. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies, and targets of the Management Plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.

1.3 The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Board has prepared a revised Management Plan on behalf of the local authorities. This plan requires adoption or endorsement by the respective authorities in order to fulfil the legal requirements placed on them by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Successful delivery of management plans for protected landscapes can only be achieved by working collaboratively with other local authorities and key stakeholders across the whole National Landscape for each area. The council maintains a close working relationship with both the Dorset and Cranborne Chase National Landscapes to achieve this and has contributed to the development of these plans to help alignment with the council's current and emerging policies.

1.4 Dorset Council responded to the consultation on the draft management plan during its production and our comments have led to changes in the final plan. Officers remain concerned about policy SRC 6, that seeks to establish a system whereby Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and developer contributions be used to contribute funding towards the management of the National Landscape (policy SRC6), on the grounds of the increase in property values resulting from the quality of the designated landscape. The concern is that this does not accord with the legal framework under which developer contributions can be required. The policy is however worded as an action to 'initiate discussions' on this matter, and these discussions can take place between planning officers and the National Landscape team.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 **That Cabinet approve the adoption of the Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan (Management Plan) (attached as Appendix 2 to this report)**

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the council to, 'prepare and publish a Management Plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.'' Adoption of the management plans prepared by each National Landscape, for and on behalf of the local authorities that fall within the protected areas, helps fulfil this part of the requirement.

4. Background

4.1 Dorset Council (“the Council”) is required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (“the Act”) to prepare and publish a management plan for any and all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (“AONB”) that fall wholly or partially within its area. AONB are now referred to as “National Landscapes” following national rebranding in 2023.

4.2 Section 89 of the Act requires the Council to, ‘prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.’’ A National Landscape Board, if such one has been designated, prepares management plans on behalf of the relevant local authority, in consultation with the local authorities for the relevant AONBs as a single plan, which is then adopted by the respective authorities.

4.3 Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 amended Sections 89 and 90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and introduced a new Section 90A. Under these amendments the Secretary of State may by regulations make provisions (a) requiring a plan under Section 89 relating to an AONB in England to contribute to the meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of part 1 of the Environment Act 2021 (“Improving the Natural Environment”); (b) setting how such a plan must contribute to the meeting of such targets; (c) setting out how a plan under Section 89 relating to an AONB in England must further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of that area. This legal requirement is known as the ‘seek to further’ duty

4.4 It is now a legal requirement for ‘relevant authorities’, including all public bodies, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the national landscapes (Section 85(1A) of the Act). This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions relating to or affecting land in the National Landscape areas. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies, and targets of the management plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.

4.5 Successful delivery of management plans for protected landscapes can only be achieved by working in partnership within local authorities, and collaboratively across the whole area of the National Landscape Board. The Council has a key role to play in this delivery. The Council maintains a close working relationship with the Partnership Boards of both the Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape to achieve this and has been an integral part in the development of these plans to help alignment with the council’s current and emerging policies.

5. Review of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan

5.1 National Landscape Management plans are required to be reviewed every five years. However, the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership formally agreed in 2023 that the former Management Plan 2019-24, continued as a material consideration in planning matters until the end of March 2025. A statement to that effect was distributed to all relevant local planning authorities in October 2023. This extension of the 2019-24 management plan allowed time for Natural England's Management Plan Guidance for National Landscapes and Defra's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) to be completed and hence ensure the Cranborne Chase Management Plan followed the latest guidance.

5.2 During Cranborne Chase Board meetings in 2023, the Board stated that the review should be a 'light touch' one, primarily updating where necessary with new sections only added where needed. During 2028/29, in advance of the next 5-year review period, it is intended to undertake the more extensive research and studies the guidance document suggests.

5.3 Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new duty on relevant authorities in relation to management plans. For national landscapes, this is enacted through Section 90A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

5.4 The review of the current National Landscape Management Plan 2019-24 began via the Cranborne Chase National Landscape team in December 2023. The review was completed by the beginning of January 2025 and the draft plan was then sent out for formal consultation for six weeks until 27th February 2025. During this period all the relevant parishes were given the opportunity to respond to the first iteration of a management plan; there was an opportunity that many took up to talk about, comment on and leave suggestion for content from the thousands that visited the Cranborne Chase NL marquee at the Chalke History Festival and again, a similar opportunity was available to all those attending the Annual Forum. Finally, E-bulletins were sent to the 3000+ contacts database held by the NL, all of whom received a link to the draft Plan for comments. The final draft Cranborne Chase Plan was sent out to just over 800 recipients along with a 'Google form' for responses.

5.5 All comments have been reviewed, and a number of changes or additions to wording have been made as a result.

5.6 The main changes, apart from the updating of references to current or new policy/documents are as follows:

5.7 Defra expects a very strong emphasis on nature recovery together with the inclusion of the targets apportioned to each of the Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) from their Targets and Outcomes

Framework. The original Natural Environment chapter has therefore been superseded by a ‘Nature Recovery’ chapter instead.

5.8 There is an additional chapter added on climate change. This, alongside nature recovery, is an absolute requirement for any new National Landscape Management Plan. Each National Landscape must also produce a Climate Action Plan for inclusion in their Management Plans by 2028 at the latest. The ‘Climate Change’ chapter therefore deals more with generalities and principles at this time.

5.9 ‘Water’ now also has its own chapter whereas it was only briefly included in the original Natural Environment chapter.

5.10 There are three key issues highlighted that will have a significant effect on achieving the purpose of designation and the ambitions of this management plan.

Key Issue 1 - Nature’s decline and the ecological crisis;

Key Issue 2 - The climate emergency and

Key Issue 3 - Health and peoples’ engagement with the natural environment.

5.11 These reflect Defra’s four primary criteria. Defra requires National Landscapes to acknowledge and highlight how the outcomes and policies in the Plan target their four primary criteria of ‘Nature, Climate, People and Place’. Icons will be used beside each Outcome in the final version of the Plan indicating which of these criteria it targets. The Plan will primarily be published as a web-based version as last time, but the NL team will investigate the options of the Plan being in other formats. The Plan is currently with a design company to create the final fully illustrated version.

5.12 The Cranborne Chase Management Plan 2025-2030 (Appendix 2) is being presented for adoption by all the relevant Local Authorities (Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and New Forest). Its adoption will fulfil the duties placed on the council under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as has been amended by the LURA 2023. It is therefore proposed that the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 be adopted, for use as:

• part of the evidence base for the preparation of the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans and other relevant council strategies, policies and projects;

• as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and

• to inform the development and delivery of the Council’s services and activities.

6. Issues raised during consultation

6.1 Dorset Council submitted comments during the consultation on the draft management plan: these were prepared by officers with the approval of the Cabinet Member and were submitted on 25 February 2025. These suggestions have largely been been taken on board but some planning matters will require further discussion during the implementation of the plan.

6.2 The management plan includes an aspirational policy PT7, stating that 'development proposals should aim to provide a net gain in biodiversity of at least 20%, particularly regarding the priority habitats listed in the Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan'. These targets are set through planning rather than through the National Landscape Management Plan, and national planning practice guidance is clear that plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain unless this can be justified and evidenced.

6.3 The management plan also refers to Community Infrastructure Levy being a mechanism that could allow a financial contribution towards National Landscape management, and includes policy SRC6 that 'by the end of 2026, initiate discussion to formulate a developer contribution scheme to secure monies from the enhanced property values to support the management of this National Landscape's character, qualities and landscapes which bring about those heightened values'.

6.4 Decisions about the setting of Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 planning obligations rest with the local planning authorities rather than the National Landscape partnerships, and are required to follow national legislation and policy. Such contributions can be applied only where there is a direct impact from a development which cannot be mitigated or dealt with through the planning application and design of the site directly. They must meet a number of tests set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy regulations. While the Council fully acknowledges and supports the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, this is considered to be best served by making planning decisions in the light of relevant local and national planning policy, and continuing to contribute funding towards the National Landscape partnership. This matter can be discussed further during the implementation of the management plan.

7. Alternative options considered

7.1 Whilst there is an option to not endorse or adopt the Management Plan there remains a duty on the council, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, to have such a plan in place and a strengthened duty that the Local Planning

Authorities, ‘seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty’. The plan has been through public consultation, comments have been considered, and the final management plan has been amended to take some of these into consideration.

7.2 Given the context above, the option not to present the plan for adoption has been dismissed. Where there are remaining concerns about the wording of some of the policies, these can be discussed with the National Landscape team during the implementation of the management plan, and during its next review.

8. Legal considerations

8.1 The Council is required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as has been amended by LURA 2023 to prepare and publish a management plan for any and all AONBs in its area. The management plans are prepared by the National Landscape Board acting on behalf of the relevant local authorities to ensure consistency across the respective landscapes. However, in order for the Council to be able to meet its obligation under the Act, the management plans require endorsement/ adoption by the council.

8.2 The use of Community Infrastructure Levy and developer contributions are controlled by the Community Infrastructure Levy regulations and are the responsibility of local planning authorities. The suggested developer contributions scheme is not considered to be in accordance with those regulations, and this will be discussed further with the National Landscape team.

9. Financial implications

9.1 There are no new financial implications arising from the proposal to adopt the Management Plan. The National Landscapes each receive annual revenue funding contributions according to DEFRA’s funding formula, with 75% of the funding from central government and 25% combined local authority contributions. Dorset Council currently contributes £22,074.28 per annum to the running of the team. This is 29.48% of the combined local authority contributions, which total £74,877.84. Wiltshire Council is the principal local authority contributor, as it covers the largest area of the National Landscape: other contributing authorities are Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and Somerset Council.

9.2 The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership is hosted by Wiltshire Council and so that council manages the DEFRA grant funding for capital and

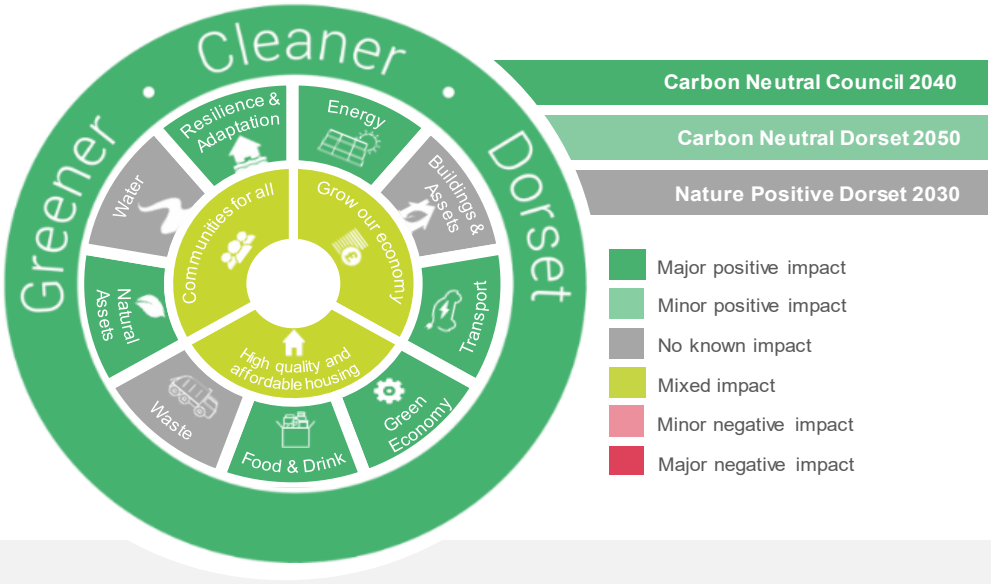
revenue. Grant income of £1.477m is expected for Cranborne Chase in 2025/26.

9.3 The suggestion that Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 contributions are made towards the National Landscape team would have financial implications for this authority, reducing the amount that could be spent on other infrastructure and affordable housing (or alternatively, having adverse impacts on the viability of development, which could harm the council's five-year housing land supply position).

10. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

10.1 The government has tasked National Landscapes to play their part in nature's recovery in line with its international declarations to protect 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (30x30) and the national targets set through its Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), emanating from its Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. There are ten targets in total with three of these specifically apportioned to each National Landscape. Details of how the Cranborne Chase National Landscape has considered Nature Recovery and Climate Change are set out in Chapters 5 and 6 of the Management Plan respectively.

Adoption of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

11. Well-being and health implications

11.1 The mental physical and emotional health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly understood and appreciated. The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people and crucially to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too.

11.2 Projects and programmes are delivered within the landscape to support access to, and enjoyment of, these nationally important areas. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape has a website and literature to guide people to activities and locations that they may wish to visit.

12. Other implications

12.1 Management plans for National Landscapes, while not constituting planning policy, can be a material consideration in planning decisions, and form part of the evidence base for Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and other relevant council strategies.

13. Risk implications

13.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

National Landscapes are required to review their management plans at least every 5 years. An extension of 12 months was agreed by Defra in this case but this has now finished. If the proposal is not approved the Council will be unable to demonstrate that it has fulfilled obligations under Section 89 of the Act which requires the Council to, ‘prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.’

Any potential risk associated with adopting the management plan have been considered by officers as part of the consultation processes that informed the final version presented. Suggested inclusions and amendments were made at that time.

14. Equalities

14.1 National landscapes strive to be inclusive and accessible to all. The management plan aligns with and supports this and the ability of people who share protected characteristics, to access and enjoy the benefits of these important places.

15. Appendices

15.1 Appendix 1: Accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations

15.2 Appendix 2: Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan (Management Plan) (final text)

16. Background papers

16.1 The previous management plan for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (2019-2024) is online at National Landscape Management Plan - Cranborne Chase National Landscape

17. Report sign-off

17.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1: Accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	major positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	major positive impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	neutral
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	neutral

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	The strategy does refer to generating energy from low carbon sources, but only in a manner consistent with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the National Landscape designation. Further work on landscape sensitivity and opportunities for renewable energy generation across Dorset will be carried out as part of work on the Dorset Council Local Plan.
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	

No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership

Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025-2030

The Statutory Management Plan for the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Final Draft
April 2025

Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025-2030

The Statutory Management Plan for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

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~~(To be inserted if supplied)~~

Chair’s foreword

(To be inserted after consultation)

Introduction

1. Management Plan – context

What is a National Landscape?

1.1. A National Landscape is the everyday name for what is set out in legislation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). National Parks and National Landscapes are designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

1.2. There are forty-six National Landscapes in the UK, including thirty-four in England. Their primary purpose is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty[1]. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.'[2]

1.3. Designation of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape[3] was in 1981 and extends over 983 square kilometres (Map 1). This National Landscape is the sixth largest and is one of thirteen National Landscapes in the South West (Map 2). The majority of the National Landscape lies within the South West though 6.8% (the Hampshire section) falls within the South East. In the South West, together with the two National Parks (Exmoor and Dartmoor), the family of protected areas cover some 38% of the countryside. Further information on designation is provided in Section 2 and information on 'natural beauty' is provided in Appendix 1.

International Context IUCN Protected Landscape

1.4. The National Landscape is also of international importance. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognise it as a Category V Protected Landscape (Appendix 2). In 2013, the IUCN UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status of all National Landscapes, confirming the significant contribution they make to conserve the UK's biodiversity.

European Landscape Convention

1.5. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is a Treaty devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe (Appendix 3). Crucially, the Convention encourages the integration of landscape matters into all relevant areas of national and local policy, including cultural, economic and social policies. The ELC defines landscape as "An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." (Council of Europe 2000).

1.6. There is a particular emphasis on the need for co-operation in undertaking programmes of landscape work that cross administrative and national boundaries. This National Landscape is in a prime position to display the UK's commitment to the Convention.

[1] Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and Planning Practice Guidance
[2] Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991
[3] The legal title of the area is 'Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)'. At the Partnership Panel meeting of 9th January 2014, it was resolved that the shorter name 'Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)' would be used on a day-to-day basis, that has now become 'Cranborne Chase National Landscape'.

What is the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan?

1.7. The National Landscape Management Plan is a statutory plan that sets out the Partnership's policies for the management of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape[4]. It is a strategic over-arching document that coordinates and integrates other policies, plans and strategies where these relate to the purpose and duties. The Local Authorities with a National Landscape (the Responsible Authorities[5]) are required by law to produce and review a plan every five years. Management Plans are of national importance. No major decisions should be taken affecting the future of the National Landscape without reference to its Management Plan. The Management Plan, in its entirety, establishes the management policy of the Responsible Authorities for the designation.

1.8. The Management Plan does not formulate land use planning policies. It provides evidence to assist in the policy and decision-making process in planning. The status of the Management Plan, combined with the formal process of plan making and review, means that the National Landscape Management Plan is a material consideration in planning matters. Therefore, it should be afforded weight in decisions. The National Planning Practice Guidance confirms this, stating that 'AONB Management Plans may contain information which is relevant when preparing plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.'[6]

Why do we have a Management Plan?

1.9. The Management Plan is the only plan to guide the management of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape as a whole. The Management Plan aims to:

- Describe the significant attributes of the designation
- Summarise the trends in the condition of the landscape and quality of life for people living and working in it
- Briefly describe the drivers for change and issues acting on the designation
- Present an ambition and strategy to achieve the purposes of the designation
- Establish management principles to guide the activity and decisions of others
- Establish measures of progress and success
- Identify the who, how, and when of delivery

1.10. The review of the Management Plan and the day to day management of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape is a shared task for all. The review process is vital in securing commitment to act jointly to conserve and enhance the landscape, galvanising collaborative action. As well as being a statutory requirement, a five-year review of the National Landscape Management Plan is necessary to ensure continuing relevance considering changing circumstances, new drivers, and adaptive learning from implementing the plan.

[4] Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the NERC Act (2006).
[5] The Responsible Authorities are Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset Councils; Hampshire County Council, and the New Forest District Council.
[6] Planning Practice Guidance paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 8-040-20190721

Who Approves the Plan?

1.11. Many people and organisations commented on this Management Plan during its preparation. The plan was subject to assessments under European directives and to public consultation between April 2024 and February 2025. The National Landscape Partnership endorses the plan and relevant local authorities have formally adopted it. It is published with the assistance of the partners who are responsible for much of the plan's delivery.

1.12. This Management Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Habitat Regulations Assessment, and supporting documents are all available on the Cranborne Chase National Landscape website: add hyperlink

1.13. You can make enquiries about these documents to the Cranborne Chase National Landscape team through the website or via info@cranbornechase.org.uk

Who will deliver the Management Plan?

1.14. The Management Plan is for the geographic area, not just for one authority or body. It is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty is met. Delivering the vision and outcomes contained in this plan will require action from all those with an interest in the National Landscape.

1.15. A Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership exists to bring people together and encourage a strong sense of 'ownership' to care for the area. Its membership is wide-ranging. The Partnership Board is, technically, a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) that advises the relevant local authorities[7] on the development and implementation of the management plan.

1.16. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership will play an important role in delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. However, its successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders, including local authorities and other public bodies, land owners and land managers, non-government organisations, developers, businesses, residents and people who benefit from the area.

Duty to further the purpose of designation

1.17. It is a legal requirement that 'relevant authorities'[8] must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape[9]. This legal requirement is known as the 'seek to further' duty. This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the National Landscape. More information about the 'must seek to further' duty is provided in Appendix 4.

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[7] CRoW Act 2000 Section 89 (11) "relevant local authority" means:
(a) in the case of an area of outstanding natural beauty which is wholly comprised in one principal area, the local authority for that area, and
(b) in any other case, the local authorities for all the principal areas wholly or partly comprised in the area of outstanding natural beauty, acting jointly.

[8] CRoW Act 2000 Section 85 (2) The following are 'relevant authorities' for the purposes of this section,
(a) any Minister of the Crown,
(b) any public body,
(c) any statutory undertaker, and
(d) any person holding public office.

[9] Section 245 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023

How will the Management Plan be delivered?

Working together

1.18. This Management Plan is a **place-based plan** for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, not just the National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee. The JAC is unable to deliver the plan by itself. The Plan helps inform the activity of a multitude of partners, stakeholders, landowners, communities and visitors to contribute to the purposes of the protected landscape designation.

1.19. The legal requirement that 'relevant authorities' must seek to further the purpose of National Landscape designation (the 'seek to further' duty) provides an important mechanism for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. There are several relevant authorities and other key stakeholders making decisions that affect the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. This makes it very challenging to develop and deliver a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyments of its special qualities. However, the potential benefits are huge, including better coordination of planning, development, rural support schemes, nature recovery planning, tourism and recreation.

1.20. Taking a consistent approach means being consistent regarding (and, ideally, being compatible with): the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape; national policy relating to national landscapes; the policies of the Management Plan; and the guidance and position statements published by the National Landscape Partnership. However, this does not necessarily mean that decisions made or actions taken will always be the same across the whole of the National Landscape, as these will vary depending on local social, economic, and environmental circumstances. With respect to development, a planning protocol was agreed in 2005 that sets out how the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership and the relevant Local Planning Authorities will engage on planning matters that affect the National Landscape.[10]

1.21. The new duty to seek to further the purposes of designation combined with a statutory Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) act as a powerful driver for relevant authorities, including public bodies, to continue working collaboratively towards the outcomes in the plan and to contribute even more.

Working in partnership

1.22. A successful partnership requires an agreed delivery plan that translates the strategy and outcomes into actions. It is the working document of the Protected Landscape, used through the implementation period to track progress on targets and measures of success. Importantly, it identifies the expected deliverers so that partners can be held accountable and is also the place to establish the 'how' of delivery.

1.23. Once the Management Plan is finalised and the implementation phase begins, activity springs from the Delivery Plan, which timetables the objectives and policies across the life of the Plan. The Delivery Plan can also give an estimate of the resources required for each outcome, assisting with an understanding of the necessary budgetary requirements in the delivery phase. Measures of success should also be evident in the related outcome statement.

[10] See https://cranbornechase.org.uk/our-work/planning/planning-protocol/

Delivery Plan

1.24. How the Partnership will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan itself, as well as encourage and support other stakeholders, is set out in a 5-year Delivery Plan that is regularly reviewed.

1.25. The Delivery Plan will be developed as a partnership project between the local authorities, other key stakeholders and local communities who wish to take part, supported by the National Landscape Team, once this Management Plan is adopted. The Delivery Plan will identify the key actions but that list is not intended to be exhaustive. In essence, stakeholders are asked to:

- have regard to the Management Plan, including its vision, outcomes and, perhaps most importantly, its policies;
- incorporate the Management Plan's vision, outcomes and policies into their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decisions, where appropriate.

How will the delivery of the Management Plan be monitored?

Performance monitoring

- Performance monitoring will occur by assessing the success of partners in implementing actions. This will be documented in an Annual Review produced each summer.

Condition monitoring

- Condition monitoring is about the state of the land itself. A core suite of indicators measure change in the condition of the key attributes of the area. These include its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and built heritage. Information on these indicators is used to produce a full State of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape report. New indicators are adopted for monitoring purposes as and when improved data becomes available and to reflect changing priorities, for example, in relation to nature recovery and climate change adaption.
- Defra and its agencies provide environmental and social data cut to the National Landscape boundary. Natural England leads in this work, in close partnership with Defra, the English National Park Authorities Association, Historic England and the National Landscapes Association. Recently, Defra published a new Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF). In May 2024, it released its first set of national data, though several data sets are to follow. The framework includes 10 target indicators supported by 24 additional statistic sheets. These targets are listed in Appendix 5 where a suite of additional monitoring indicators that have been developed for each policy are also listed.

1.26. Implementation of this National Landscape Management Plan is intended to improve the condition of the area. Condition monitoring will be used to assess whether the management plan has succeeded or failed. Results from condition monitoring activities will also be used to inform future strategies, plans and management activity.

Adaptive management planning

1.27. An adaptive approach to implementing a Management Plan involves closely monitoring the impacts and effects of activity and then changing the approach if other courses of action are deemed more effective. Adaptive management planning, therefore, involves a cycle of act-monitor-learn-change, altering the course of action if there is an identified need for adaptation.

How does the Management Plan fit with the Policies and Plans of others?

1.28. National and local policies already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural beauty of the National Landscape. In addition, many partner organisations prepare strategies and plans that deal with a range of other issues that affect the area (such as the management of development, transport, tourism, recreation, energy, water resources and biodiversity).

1.29. These policies, plans and strategies will inform the National Landscape Management Plan. Implementation of this Management Plan will complement them and influence the preparation and delivery of other key policies, plans and processes affecting the area. This covers, for example, Local Plans and other planning documents. An explanation of the policy context is set out in Appendix 6.

Management Plan – review of the 2019-2024 plan

1.30. Engagement internally and with our local authority and other partners took place over the course of 2024. A summary of the timetable and key outputs from this consultation is set out in Appendix xx

Management Plan – structure and use

Structure

1.31. Building on the purposes of designation, the issues affecting the National Landscape are presented under three themes:

Conserving and enhancing - Outstanding Landscapes

Conserving and enhancing - Living and Working Landscapes

Conserving and enhancing - Special Landscapes to Enjoy

1.32. These themes are separated into eleven topics:

OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPES

- Landscape (chapter 4)
- Nature Recovery (chapter 5)
- Climate Change (chapter 6)
- Water (chapter 7)
- Historic and Cultural Heritage (chapter 8)
- Dark Night Skies (chapter 8)

LIVING AND WORKING LANDSCAPES

- Rural Land Management (chapter 10)
- Planning and Transport (chapter 11)
- Sustaining Rural Communities (chapter 12)

SPECIAL LANDSCAPES TO ENJOY

- Awareness and Understanding (chapter 13)
- Wellbeing, Involvement and Learning (chapter 14)

1.33. For each of the eleven topics, the plan includes:

- Features that make this National Landscape special with regard to (topic).
- The Ambitions combine to form the 'Vision' for the National Landscape – Achieving the ambitions will make a significant difference to the area.
- Key Achievements – Work the National Landscape and partners have already undertaken.
- The Key Issues – Many issues affect the National Landscape. The key issues are those to address during the life of this plan. They are considered under four categories set out by Natural England (nature-climate-people-place)
- The Issues Explained – This is information that explains the key issues in more detail.
- Outcomes – Specific things (not in any order of priority) to achieve to make progress towards the ambition. Wherever possible, these are measurable, with a realistic timescale for completion. The links to 'Nature, Climate, People, and/or Place' is marked.
- Policies – How to achieve the outcomes.

1.34. The ten sections are not a checklist of all the activities that affect the National Landscape. Rather, they provide a framework for setting out the range of topics relevant to the statutory purpose for designating the area as a National Landscape.

1.35. The National Landscape Team and Partnership are catalysts for action. The National Landscape Team will prepare, with partners, a 5-year Delivery Plan, reviewing that plan annually.

1.36. Maps referred to in the plan are at the back of this document.

Use

1.37. None of the sections of this plan operates in isolation. There are many connections between them. Many of the outcomes and policies relate to more than just the topic in which they appear. Tackling the issues identified depends upon integrated action. Action taken to achieve one set of outcomes should complement and reinforce the achievement of outcomes elsewhere in the Plan. This is particularly true in relation to development and rural land management. When a development is being proposed in the National Landscape, the developer and the local authority should have regard to all the plan's policies, not just to those under Living and Working Landscapes.

1.38. One of the areas that the Management Plan relates to is in the policy-making and decision-making of local planning authorities (LPAs). They are obliged to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes. Therefore, LPAs should demonstrate how they have taken into account the Management Plan policies when reviewing and developing their own policies, including those within their development plans. The Management Plan policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirations will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies.

1.39. In addition, the local planning authorities have the power to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, or so much of it as is included in their area[11].

[11] CRoW Act 2000 Section 84(4).

1.40. The Management Plan is a material consideration in planning decisions. However, it is recognised that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the LPA's development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

1.41. The forthcoming Defra guidance on the 'must seek to further' duty may provide guidance on how National Landscape Management Plans should be taken into consideration in relation to this duty. In the meantime, it is important to note that Natural England's view, in this regard, is that proposed measures 'should align with and help to deliver the aims and objectives of the designated landscape's statutory management plan'.

1.42. Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act makes provisions for the Secretary of State to require relevant authorities to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of national landscape management plans and to set out how a relevant authority may or must do so.[12] These provisions could potentially come into effect, via secondary legislation, as early as 2025.

2. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape

The special qualities of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

2.1. The 'special qualities' of a National Landscape are those aspects of the area's natural beauty that make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They embrace distinctive characteristics and key features that make it special and appealing; and worthy of protection[13]. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the National Landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.

Statement of Significance

2.2. Forming part of the extensive belt of chalkland that stretches across southern central England, the Cranborne Chase National Landscape is a landscape of national significance. Its special qualities flow from the historical interaction of humans and the land. They include its diversity, distinctiveness, sense of history and remoteness, dark night skies, tranquillity; and its overwhelmingly rural character. With mists slowly forming over expansive downlands, it can be a moody, evocative landscape. The sights and sounds of bygone times never far away. It is an unspoilt and aesthetically pleasing landscape.

2.3. Natural beauty is not just the visual appearance of the countryside. It includes the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features; and the historic and cultural associations and our sensory perceptions of them. The combinations of these factors give each locality its own sense of place, contributing immensely to the quality of life.

2.4. The National Landscape designation embraces a collection of fine landscapes, each with its different landforms, soils and wildlife habitats. Whilst the chalk downland is a dominant feature, the escarpments, valleys, greensand terraces and clay vales reflect the geomorphology and impact of the

[12] Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
[13] The special characteristics are the unique components that give the area its sense of place; the special features are the physical elements in the landscape that are regionally distinctive, as described under each topic.

underlying geology. Sometimes the changes between these landscapes are slow and gentle; in other cases, such as above and below escarpments, they are quite swift and obvious. Views across and along these landscapes can be wide and expansive whilst in the valleys they are more focussed and channelled. Unspoilt and panoramic views are characteristic of this National Landscape.

2.5. Hilltop earthworks, monuments, and tree clumps are features of the chalk downlands. They serve as landmarks to help orientate ourselves in these extensive landscapes. In historic terms, the landscapes of the area today are extraordinarily rich. Evidence of successive eras of human activity and settlements can often be lost: but not in this National Landscape. The landscapes offer up evidence of the imprint of man, carved out over the centuries; a continuous timeline throughout British history. Prehistoric monuments of national importance, historic borderlands, ancient field systems, the Dorset Cursus, Ackling Dyke, droves and routeways all have stories to tell. The pioneering excavations and findings of General Pitt-Rivers, of the present-day Rushmore Estate in Cranborne Chase, led to him being known as the 'Father of Modern Archaeology'.

2.6. Eight thousand years ago, Neolithic peoples first started to change and manage this land. They built burial mounds and mysterious constructions, with many still seen today. The Bronze and Iron Ages saw the creation of large areas of pasture and arable farmland. The pastures on the downs date from this period. During the Anglo-Saxon period, large landholdings began to change rural society. This was already a royal hunting area when the Normans invaded. They imposed forest law on the area then known as Cranborne Chase. However, agricultural expansion continued outside the Chase and by the fifteenth century, hedges and walls divided the land into large blocks. This trend continued as sheep production became very profitable and the wealthy built large houses with extensive parks. Forest law persisted in the Chase until 1829, leading to the retention of a high proportion of woodlands.

2.7. Since then, agriculture has changed rapidly but the settlement patterns are very similar to those that existed in the eighteenth century. There are more than 550 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, over 2,000 Listed Buildings and 17 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens within the National Landscape.

2.8. The National Landscape is of great ecological importance. It has 5 internationally, and 60 nationally, protected sites. These range from ancient downland, chalk rivers and meadows to scattered semi-natural ancient woodland, which include remnants of the medieval Cranborne Chase royal hunting area and the former Royal Forests of Selwood and Gillingham. There are also around 520 sites of local importance for wildlife comprising just over 9% of the National Landscape.

2.9. Large, rectangular fields emphasise the open character of the chalk downs. The chalkland valley floors of the Rivers Wylye and Ebble are mainly in permanent pasture, with many copses and hedgerows, whilst the ridges and valley sides are predominantly arable. In the northwest, the sandstone fringe of wooded ridges and valleys includes rich parklands such as Longleat and Stourhead. The greensand terraces comprise high quality farmland. Agriculture, and its associated businesses, is still a significant employer together with commercial forestry and limited mineral extraction. In fact, the paucity of mineral extraction is a feature of this National Landscape.

2.10. The lush, wooded clay Vale of Wardour, harbouring the River Nadder, forms a broad wedge through the centre of the area, separating two large and distinct areas of largely arable chalk downland. To the south, there is the unusually wooded downland of Cranborne Chase itself, with its steeply cut coombes and dry valleys so typical of chalk landscapes. To the north, the West Wiltshire Downs are

generally more elevated, rising to Great Wood and Grovely Wood on the eastern ridge and from where, on a clear day, the huge chalkland plateau that is Salisbury Plain can be seen stretching northwards in the distance.

2.11. Both local communities and visitors hold the immense cultural, historic and ecological riches in high esteem. These aesthetic assets, together with iconic panoramic views of open and expansive downlands together with the more enclosed and sheltered views in valleys, dark skies awash with stars, the wealth of wildlife, plethora of historic sites, ancient droves and route ways, all offer opportunities for exploration, relaxation, walking and cycling. Residents and visitors alike turn to the landscapes and scenic beauty of the National Landscape to refresh the spirit as well as enhancing health and well-being.

2.12. This National Landscape is one of the darkest night skies in the United Kingdom affording a sky astoundingly full of stars and, depending on the time of year, a view of the Milky Way with the unaided eye.

2.13. This National Landscape is a deeply rural area with widely scattered hamlets, villages and narrow roads. This mainly agricultural landscape is sparsely populated, tranquil, and has no large settlements within its boundaries. Nearby market towns such as Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Blandford, Fordingbridge, Wimborne and Warminster are growth areas.

The setting of the National Landscape

2.14. The setting of a National Landscape is the surroundings in which the influence of the area is experienced. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the area diminishes. The construction of high, expansive, or industrial structures, or a change generating movement, noise, odour, vibration or dust over a wide area, will affect the setting. As our appreciation of the relationships between neighbouring landscapes grows, so our understanding of what constitutes the setting continues to evolve.

2.15. Views are one element of setting, being associated with the visual experience and aesthetic appreciation. Views are particularly important to this National Landscape. This is because of the juxtaposition of high and low ground and the fact that recreational users value them. Without husbandry and management, views within, across, from and to the National Landscape may be lost or degraded.

Landscape Character Assessment

Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

2.16. Landscape Character Assessment draws together the features and attributes that contribute to the distinctive and outstanding character of the National Landscape. The 2003 Integrated Landscape Character Assessment and the briefer Sustaining Landscape Character (2006) were reassessed during 2024[14]. A revised Cranborne Chase Character Assessment now explores the physical, ecological, visual, historic and cultural forces that shape the present-day working landscape, encompassing its social, economic and recreational characteristics. It identifies eight Landscape Types, each with distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, and historical evolution. Four cover the chalk landscapes, two the

[14] See CBA (2024) Cranborne Chase National Landscape - Landscape Character Assessment at https://cranbornechase.org.uk/our-work/publications/planning-resources/

greensand areas, and one each the clay vale and the hills between the chalk and the heathland outside the National Landscape. The individual characteristics of the eighteen geographical Landscape Character Areas are set out in the LCA. (A précis of the eight Landscape Types is set out in Appendix 7)

Landscape Sensitivity Study

2.17. The inherent sensitivities of the landscapes of this National Landscape are set out in the Landscape Sensitivity Study (2007). Landscape sensitivity relates to the intrinsic fragility or robustness of a particular landscape to any type of change. This study identifies and addresses the broad issues and pressures for change within the National Landscape, and how these might have an impact on the landscape character areas.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

2.18. The Historic Landscape Characterisation (2008) describes and maps the historic and archaeological dimensions of the present-day landscape. Together with the Historic Environment Action Plans (2011), these two documents are a huge educational and management resource, charting the ever changing, living landscapes and the lives of those who made, and make, this their home; in essence a 'living library' and 'countryside encyclopaedia'.

Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Character Assessment

2.19. The Heritage Lottery funded (HLF) Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership scheme supported a more detailed LCA (2018) of this middle section of the National Landscape. It has fourteen Local Landscape Character Areas, which nest within the broader character areas of the 2003, and 2024, assessments.

You can download all these documents from the Cranborne Chase National Landscape website.[15]

The condition of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

2.20. Understanding how and why the National Landscape is changing is key to our work in caring for it. Data is needed to establish the current condition of key features and aspects of the area and to provide a baseline against which future change and success or failure can be assessed. The National Landscape website provides a summary of the target indicators and data currently in place and being used to monitor changing condition in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. This combines new national targets and data sets published by Defra in 2023/24 with more established, local indicators, set out.

Key issues

2.21. After considering Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan goals[16], the National Landscape Partnership finds three key issues that will have a significant effect on achieving the purpose of designation and the ambitions of this management plan. These can be summarised as follows:

Key issues
Key Issue 1 - Nature's decline and the ecological crisis

[15] See https://cranbornechase.org.uk/our-work/publications/planning-resources/
[16] Defra (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan

Growing a resilient network of land and water that is richer in plants and wildlife.

- Defra's apex goal is 'Thriving plants and wildlife', which all the other goals will help to achieve. The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan states that "over the last century, the state of nature in our country has declined dramatically as the pressure of our demands has made our habitats increasingly degraded and fragmented, and brought species to the brink of extinction". Wildlife loss is well documented and understood, see for example https://stateofnature.org.uk/ Climate change is threatening the loss of already diminished wildlife at an even greater scale and pace. There is a need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. The need for action is urgent.
- Growth in global demand for food is leading to worries about food security and the need to intensify food production. Many woodlands in the area are small, fragmented and difficult to access. There is often no infrastructure to make sustainable woodland management viable. A lack of management in most traditional orchards is hastening the demise of these very valuable wildlife habitats. Within the National Landscape, 80% of traditional orchards present in the 1930s have gone, unenclosed heathland has declined by 30% and the vast majority of the flower rich meadows have been replaced by agriculturally improved pasture and arable. Many remaining areas of habitat have become isolated, disconnecting their small populations of plants and animals.
- National Landscapes collectively signed up to the Colchester Declaration in 2019 to demonstrate their readiness to act to reverse wildlife decline and habitat reduction as part of a wider strategy to tackle climate change. The declaration contains commitments to produce nature recovery plans and restore habitats and populations of endangered species. The Recovery Plan was published during 2024. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of this National Landscape and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change, in a timely manner.

Key Issue 2 - The climate emergency

Mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

2.22. Climate change was identified by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as one of the direct drivers of biodiversity loss. Building the resilience of our environment, by creating more joined up and buffered places for nature as well as tackling hazards that are increased by climate change, is crucial to leaving our environment in a better state. Climate change is happening, and its impacts are unavoidable. There is already experience of the impacts of a rapidly heating climate and this threatens many of the defining characteristics and Special Qualities of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. The habitats most susceptible to harm are the rivers and streams within this National Landscape. Examples of the impacts also include pest and diseases (Ash Dieback being an ongoing and highly visible example); changing timings of seasons; low summer river flows; and damage to vegetation from high winds.

2.23. The Landscapes Review emphasised the importance of the role National Landscapes should play in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The National Landscape Partnership endorses this, in line with the commitments in the Colchester Declaration .

2.24. National Landscapes are also now required to embed climate adaptation plans within future Management Plans, and will be expected to contribute to climate change targets in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF). The intention is to produce a Climate Change Adaptation Plan and embed it within this Management Plan by the end of 2028.

- Land use and management practices must address climate change issues. Farming needs to adapt to focus on improving soil health to continue producing food, whilst reducing soil loss, sequestering carbon and providing better water quality and flood management; and tree cover needs to increase to capture carbon. Other areas such as energy and transport, and food and drink will also need to be addressed, with much more of our energy needs met through low carbon energy technologies, buildings becoming more energy efficient and greater resilience built into our infrastructure; and community food networks being created to link farmers, businesses and consumers.

Key Issue 3 - Health and peoples' engagement with the natural environment

Ensuring the National Landscape helps to support and sustain livelihoods and realises the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.

- Defra wants everyone to be able to enjoy nature and national heritage across the country. In line with the Countryside Code, we need to respect and conserve nature, and encourage managed access – so that everyone can enjoy and secure those treasures for every generation to come.
- We recognise a high-quality environment attracts and supports economic and social viability so we must respond quickly and vigorously to environmental challenges and do so in a way that supports livelihoods and communities. The solutions must work in social and economic terms as well as environmental if they are to have a lasting impact. Development maintains economic viability, sustains the population and supports those who manage the land. The National Landscape covers several administrative areas. There is a need to coordinate policy to make sure that it is consistent across the area.
- There is a need to sustain village facilities and services as well as providing more affordable homes and employment for local people. Achieving suitable infrastructure is a challenge due to the requirements to conserve and enhance the special nature of the environment. There is a need to retain the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- There are declining farm and forest incomes. Land managers must find either additional or new sources of income. They may grow new crops and/or move into other sectors, such as tourism and recreation. This can help to maintain a viable business and improve the products and services on offer to the community and visitors.
- Connections within the National Landscape and with its setting are important. The mental and physical health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly

understood and appreciated. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on human behaviour. People are more aware of the importance of green and blue spaces.

- 'Green prescribing' is becoming increasingly popular and can help encourage many to actively explore the countryside and gain health and wellbeing benefits from accessing Cranborne Chase National Landscape.
- It is accepted that not everyone has access to nature or landscapes hence outreach to wide and diverse audiences is supported.
- For some people, particularly the less mobile and those with mental and physical health conditions it can be difficult to explore parts of the area. Standard practices sometimes create obstacles, like steps and stiles. There is a need to remove obstacles, promote routes that are suitable for people with limited mobility and horse-riders as well as to use technology to help all parts of society to benefit from this special place.

The impact of these key issues on the natural beauty of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape were considered during the development of the vision and the outcomes.

3. A Vision for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

What is the Vision?

3.1. In 2030, the Cranborne Chase National Landscape will be an inspirational example of sustainable management in action. A nationally appreciated place where:

- its distinctive local landscapes, historic heritage, and wildlife are conserved and enhanced by those who work and manage the land, nurturing a valued and treasured countryside for future generations;
- its healthy soils, clean air and water are appreciated, prized and respected by all;
- its characteristic vibrant villages, profoundly rural character, local economies and sense of pride are tangible to all who live and visit here, or just pass through;
- the breadth and depth of historic land use offers up its stories in the landscape today;
- its cultural heritage is conserved, understood, enhanced, valued and enjoyed;
- the aesthetic qualities of the landscape and environment, Rights of Way and Open Access, along with the sense of wonder and enjoyment, are appreciated by all; and
- the quality of life remains high and the aspirations of those who live and work here are supported.

3.2. The National Landscape Partnership has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance natural beauty. This Partnership identifies the following three components:

Components		Our Ambitions
1 Outstanding Landscapes	A	• The unique character, tranquillity and special qualities of the National Landscape are conserved and enhanced. • The area's special qualities are widely understood.

		• Informed decision-making strengthens the special qualities. • When change happens, it is consistent with the character of the landscape and the setting of the National Landscape. • We will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.
	B	• All natural resources in the National Landscape are sustainably managed. • Wildlife thrives in the National Landscape and can move freely around the area. • The natural environment will be healthy and resilient to the effects of climate change.
	C	• The historic and cultural environment of the National Landscape is conserved and enhanced. • Everyone understands, values and enjoys its cultural and heritage assets. • The story of the area's evolution over time should be clear to everyone. • Light pollution will be minimised to benefit of human health, wildlife, reducing expenditure and carbon emissions, bringing new opportunities for education and rural tourism.
2 Living and Working Landscapes	A	• Our rural land is managed regeneratively. • This will meet the demand for food, fuel and other produce in ways that conserve and enhance the landscape character of the National Landscape and deliver increased public benefits.
	B	• A thriving rural economy ensures economic and social wellbeing and helps sustain the landscape. • Local communities appreciate and care for the National Landscape and residents enjoy a high quality of life.
	C	• Planning and transportation strategies, policies and decisions that affect this nationally important National Landscape, conserve and enhance its special qualities. • Where development is, on balance, deemed necessary, we want it located and designed to integrate fully with the landscape character and natural beauty.
	D	• All management of, and improvements to, roads enhance the distinctive character of the area. • A range of more sustainable options for transport reduces the effects of transport on tranquillity and the natural environment of the National Landscape
	E	• Partners' policies and actions reflect National Landscape values and their national status. • Communities appreciate and care for the National Landscape. • Residents enjoy a high quality of life

3 Special Landscapes to Enjoy	A	• The area's special qualities and landscape character, its traditions, and its historic and natural assets are understood and valued by all. • Everyone understands what the National Landscape designation means and why the area was designated. • Everyone promotes and supports the National Landscape.
	B	• People are engaged with and learn about the natural, historic, and cultural heritage of the National Landscape
	C	• People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can take up countryside skills, training, and volunteering in the National Landscape.
	D	• The physical and mental wellbeing of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds is improved through connecting with and experiencing the high-quality environment of the National Landscape for physical activity, relaxation and inspiration.

3.3. By the end of this Plan period, substantial and measurable progress will have been made in four priority areas of work:

1. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership will take all collaborative action necessary to achieve its apportioned targets within Defra's Protected landscapes Outcomes and Targets Framework (PLOTF) (including acting upon its 2024 Nature Recovery Plan and Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plan due by 2028 latest)
2. The dark night skies of this International Dark-Sky Reserve will continue to be conserved and enhanced with the benefits valued and appreciated by communities and visitors alike.
3. Extensive collaboration with farmers, foresters, landowners, relevant agencies and local communities will champion integrated, enhanced management of the area's landscapes delivering measurable enhancements to the National Landscape's natural and historic environment, highlighting partnership working within a designated landscape.
4. Led by field-based staff and as the continuing legacy of the Landscape Partnership Scheme there will be ongoing, multiple opportunities for volunteers of all ages and abilities to engage with, learn and appreciate the landscapes of this area, removing barriers to access, both physical and social, whilst improving health and wellbeing.

Who is going to make it happen?

3.4. The National Landscape Partnership developed and agreed this Vision after listening to the many people who care about this very special place. The National Landscape Partnership is an alliance of sixteen national and local organisations and it steers the implementation of the Management Plan

3.5. Wiltshire Council contains the largest proportion of the National Landscape and is host Authority for the National Landscape Team. The Team prepares the Management Plan on behalf of the Partnership. The team also delivers a considerable number of projects within the Delivery Plan. In addition, the team undertakes the overall facilitation and coordination of Management Plan implementation by partners.

The Vision is a call for action.

3.6. Landowners, farmers, local people, visitors, and the many organisations working in the National Landscape, or who have a contribution to make to it, must unite and work together to achieve the Vision.

Outstanding Landscapes

4. Landscape

4.1. The topography, geology, and vegetation, and the ways they have evolved with the climate and human usage, come together to form the landscapes we experience around us today. All landscapes have character; however, that character is more substantial, obvious, and extensive in the nationally important National Landscapes, (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). We use characteristics to describe and assess those cherished landscapes.

Characteristics and features that make this National Landscape special with regards to landscape:

- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area; largely 'unspoilt' and maintained as a living agricultural landscape.
- The scale of the landscape is often grand and dramatic with the 'intensity' of landscape character almost palpable.
- The open downland offers wide expansive skies, dominant skylines, dramatic escarpments and panoramic views.
- Unity of the underlying chalk expressed in the distinctive and sometimes dramatically sculpted landforms, open vistas, escarpments and coombes.
- A rich land use history with many ancient hilltop forts, barrows and Roman roads.
- A bountiful mosaic of habitats playing host to a myriad of wildlife.
- Overlain by a woodland mosaic – including the eye-catching hill-top copses, veteran parkland trees and avenues, extensive areas of wooded downland and ancient forest together with more recent game coverts.
- Three major chalk river valleys with their individual distinctiveness.
- Distinctive settlement pattern along the valleys and vales, and small Medieval villages along the scarp spring line.
- Local vernacular building styles include the patterns of knapped flint, brick, cob, clunch, clay tiles and straw thatch.
- Strong sense of place and local distinctiveness represented by the use of local building materials and small-scale vernacular features such as the sunken lanes and distinctive black and white signposts.
- Strong sense of remoteness.
- Expanse of dark night skies and ability to see the Milky Way.

Ambition

4.2. The unique character, tranquillity and special qualities of the landscapes in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape are conserved and enhanced for future generations. There will be a widespread

understanding of the area's special qualities, and informed decision-making will strengthen these qualities. When change happens, it is to be consistent with the character of the landscape and the setting of the area. Everyone will take opportunities to restore landscape features that require it.

Key Achievements

- Publications – The effective use of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Study, and Tranquillity Study by planning policy and development management officers within the nine local planning authorities. The National Landscape team clearly identifies landscape character in all planning application responses.
- Landscape protection – Avoided potentially negative impacts on the landscape through advice, research and authoritative reports; and input to specific development applications and appeals.
- Landscape enhancement advice – Detailed discussions with Wessex Water led to a four-year funding package to enhance the farmland landscapes surrounding a strategic pipeline installation and associated pumping and storage facilities.
- A Landscape View of Trees and Woodlands – offers woodland owners, farmers and advisors a fuller understanding of the landscape character context in which they are working; Right Tree, Right Place offers guidance on tree planting in terms of landscape character whilst Trees in the Landscape details that guidance further.
- AONB Tranquillity Study – The methodology behind the Tranquillity Study is now valued as good practice. This is now being used by the New Forest National Park and other Protected Areas in the southwest to determine their own levels of tranquillity.
- Undergrounding of power lines – Power lines have been laid underground to enhance the landscape from the viewing area in front of the Fovant Badges (eight military badges cut into the chalk) and around the site of the 13th Century chapel at Fifield Bavant and in the conservation area of Horningsham.
- Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Character Assessment – This study provides a more refined understanding of the landscape character of this Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It will support a 5-year programme of activities to enhance the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the landscape by all ages, resident or visitors from outside area, through a range of natural, historic and cultural projects across the area. Its ambition is to provide a significant landscape legacy.

Key Issues

1. Understanding and sustaining landscape character – It is crucial that all decision makers, policy makers, and their advisors, together with landscape managers, planners, and project officers understand, appreciate, and use the Landscape Character Assessments.
2. Monitoring landscape change over time – Long-term, objective monitoring of landscape change takes time and resources. Fixed-point photography locations have been installed to track changes although it will be a while before it helps to determine long-term trends. Such trends may be a result of global issues such as climate change, food prices and/or demand affecting rural land management, and development.

3. Enhancing tranquillity and Dark Night Skies – National data shows the general loss of dark night skies and the risk of light pollution encroaching on the dark skies of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

   However, 90% of the National Landscape falls in the top 2 categories of darkness, as evidenced by CPRE research in 2016 and our own data gathering. This makes this area the last dark area in central southern England (See also Chapter 8 Dark Night Skies).

The Issues Explained

4.3. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape is a large area with both a consistent character, for example the downlands of West Wiltshire, and considerable diversity and contrast. There are the ancient forests and woodland of Cranborne Chase that contrast with the deeply incised chalk coombes close by. In addition, there are the more intimate and secluded chalk river valleys with their distinctive pattern of settlement.

4.4. Its special qualities include its diversity, distinctiveness, sense of history and remoteness, dark night skies, and tranquillity. It is deeply rural and largely free from development outside settlements, although the increasing scale of agricultural buildings, and the use of inappropriate materials, can be intrusive. Landscapes are sensitive to many factors to a greater or lesser degree. Agricultural crops create a cycle of change that lasts a few months while the planting or felling of woodland can cause landscape change that evolves and persists for decades. Built development can introduce changes that are rather more permanent and urbanising. There are declines in the quality of some characteristic features. Some are brought about by machine trimming of hedgerows; the planting of hedges contrary to landscape character; or tree and hedgerow planting that block or cuts out views.

4.5. A greater understanding of the character of the landscapes is crucial to helping everyone make informed decisions that contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, or may have adverse impacts upon them.

4.6. Meaningful analysis of landscape change over time can use considerable resources, depending on the aim of any such study. A tried and tested methodology using fixed-point photography in Devon produces a series of repeatable images through time. This is in use in this National Landscape but there is a need to take photographs at regular times in consistent light and weather conditions. There are now twelve fixed-point locations with landowner permissions.

4.7. Tranquillity is important for our mental and physical well-being. It improves our quality of life. Power lines, masts, cars, roads, light pollution and building developments can erode the tranquillity that means so much to all of us. We want to ensure the dark starry skies of much of the National Landscape remain that way and continue to be seen and appreciated. However, inappropriate lighting can waste energy and reduce landscape quality. This is explained in detail in chapter 8 – Dark Night Skies.

Outcomes and Policies

LAN A The landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape are fully understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.

LAN1 Promote awareness and use of 2024 Cranborne Chase National Landscape Integrated Landscape Character Assessment and the 2018 Chase and Chalke Landscape Character Assessment to:

- Develop guidance for the Landscape Character Types/Areas to inform land use planning and landscape management, to include updating the landscape and planning and landscape and land management documents.
- Promote and champion the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and its setting, particularly those that are sensitive to change.
- Promote understanding of the factors that contribute to, or detract from, tranquillity to ensure that policies and actions will more effectively conserve and enhance levels of tranquillity.
- Provide appropriate training across the range of landscape matters to relevant partners and stakeholders.

LAN B The landscape character, tranquillity, and special qualities of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and its settings are conserved and enhanced (particularly those that are the most sensitive to, or have little capacity for, change).

LAN2 Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the National Landscape must seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape with reference to key documents such as the 2024 Cranborne Chase National Landscape Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, the 2018 Chase and Chalke Landscape Character Assessment, the 2008 Historic Landscape Characterisations and National Landscape Partnership guidance documents:

- There should be a presumption against the loss of key characteristics identified in the landscape character assessments.
- Degraded distinctive landscapes and landscape features should be restored.
- Positive landscape change should be promoted to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.
- Planting and amenity projects should conserve and enhance landscape character.
- Opportunities should be pursued to underground and remove visually intrusive power and telecommunications lines, poles, and masts, and other incongruous features, especially where they detract from the Special Qualities.

LAN C Understand the rate and degree of landscape change within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

	LAN3 Encourage, support and analyse research on landscape issues affecting the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and its surroundings to inform policy formulation and the consequent action required: • Undertake fixed point photography biennially to identify areas where landscape character, condition, or quality has been or is being lost. This will inform potential restoration and enhancement measures.

5. Nature Recovery

5.1. Biodiversity, or the variety and abundance of wildlife, is in serious decline. It is widely accepted that the UK is the most depleted country in Europe for biodiversity.

5.2. The government has tasked National Landscapes to play their part in nature's recovery in line with its international declarations to protect 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (30x30) and the national targets set through its Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), emanating from its Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. There are ten targets in total with three of these specifically apportioned to each National Landscape (see Appendix 5)

5.3. The variety, abundance and proliferation of biodiversity helps underpin ecosystem services, and vice versa. Our natural capital, such as geology and soils, clean air and water, provide those ecosystem services; the fundamentals of life itself. Ecosystem services are the basis for a rich diversity of wildlife and must be conserved and enhanced to support nature's recovery whilst also addressing the uncertainties caused by a changing climate.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to nature recovery:

- Rich ecological character expressed in the diversity of habitats, including the distinctive species-rich chalk downland, clear fast flowing chalk streams and rivers, ancient and calcareous woodlands, and rare chalk heath and water meadows.
- An abundance of both emblematic wildlife species and those suffering decline such as the greater horseshoe bat, Adonis blue and Duke of Burgundy butterflies, tree sparrow and skylark.
- Clear streams and rivers supporting wild trout, grayling, dace and chub, together with the endangered water vole and aquatic species that rely on high quality water such as the white-clawed crayfish, seriously threatened by the introduction of non-native crayfish.
- Extensive tracts of arable land supporting the six most nationally threatened farmland birds; the grey partridge, lapwing, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow and corn bunting and rare arable plants, such as the prickly poppy and pheasants' eye.
- The historic status of Cranborne Chase as a royal hunting area is evidenced by its unusually high proportion of ancient woodland within a chalk landscape, boasting assemblages of bats, woodland birds, fungi and rare lichen.

Ambition

5.4. The National Landscape will be a place where habitats are restored, expanded, created and connected allowing wildlife to thrive and move freely across the area. Its natural capital assets will be underpinning healthy and resilient habitats, able to adjust to the effects of climate change.

Key Achievements

- This National Landscape has a key role to play in the hugely ambitious Big Chalk initiative, aiming to build a dynamic nature recovery network that will be central to the UK's pledge to protect 30% of land and halt the decline of nature by 2030. Comprehensive mapping and modelling at different spatial scales will support decision making and guide targeted interventions at a National Landscape and wider strategic level.

- The National Landscape is also a partner in the collaborative Wiltshire Wildlife Trust led Wiltshire Chalk Project.
- The Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, started mid 2021, has seen a total of 147 grants awarded to farmers and landowners within this National Landscape, totalling £2,019,845. Forty percent of those grants awarded included specific actions to enhance nature recovery.
- Farmer clusters - There are currently eleven farm clusters comprising xx h and covering around two-thirds of the National Landscape. These clusters effectively facilitate farmer-led landscape-scale conservation of soil, water, and biodiversity. Clusters have the capacity to help meet Sir John Lawton's key aim of achieving 'more, bigger, better and joined up' wildlife habitats as outlined in the 2010 report 'Making Space for Nature' and should help achieve the PLTOF targets.
- A Draft Nature Recovery Plan 2025-30 has been produced for Cranborne Chase National Landscape during 2023-24. The final Plan will be endorsed by the NL Partnership during 2025.
- The National Landscape has engaged with four Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) consultations from the four County level Local Authorities.
- A Landscape Permeability study was undertaken by consultants during 2023 to determine the prime areas where targeting effort to increase habitats and associated species could be most effective from a wildlife perspective.
- The Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme, running from 2000-2025, successfully concluded work within 20 projects, four of which were natural heritage projects that trained volunteers in species ID, survey methods and practical conservation tasks to enhance habitats.
- This National Landscape was the lead partner in the South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Initiative (2009-15). Although long finished, this culminated in an additional 1000h of habitat specifically created to begin reversing the decline in numbers of the six most threatened farmland bird species; grey partridge, lapwing, corn bunting, yellow wagtail, turtle dove and tree sparrow. It evidenced the willingness of arable farmers to take positive action to benefit biodiversity.
- Forty-four bird species were monitored up until 2016; 19 that make up the Farmland Bird Index and a selection of other 'Birds of Conservation Concern' plus the brown hare. This scientific monitoring showed that 42% of species assessed showed a significant positive population response to Farmland Bird Project management compared to population trends on plots with no such management. Other 'spin off' wildlife beneficiaries were rare arable plants and the brown hare.
- Rare arable plants – Populations of rare arable plants have declined dramatically over the past 60 years and they are the most critically threatened group of plants in the UK. A Wessex Water funded study pinpointed rare arable flora 'hotspots' together with indications of where good arable flora communities were likely to be present. The report consequently determined 39% of this National Landscape as an Arable Flora Target Area, where focused management for arable plants would be likely to be most effective.
- Cranborne Chase Ancient Woodland Priority Area – one of four areas in the South West. The Forestry Commission undertook a mapping and targeting exercise to identify robust habitat networks centred around clusters of ancient and native woodlands, where landscape connectivity and permeability offered the best opportunity to link and extend ancient woodlands. By working on a landscape scale

the resilience of these habitats to climate change and other threats can be enhanced. An Ancient Woodland Priority Area was established in Cranborne Chase.

Key issues

1. At the time of writing the four Responsible Authorities (one County Council and three Unitary Authorities) are in the process of producing their Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs). Most are about to produce their mapping of priority areas for nature recovery and the National Landscape has inputted to that mapping[17].

   The Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan 2025-30 has identified wildlife rich habitats and species within each landscape character area that could be created or restored, enlarged, and connected. Achieving the national nature recovery targets will require greatly increased collaboration and liaison between those that own and manage land here.

2. Fragmented and isolated habitats – This National Landscape has some of the most extensive, best, and last remaining chalk grasslands in Europe. Nevertheless, much of it exists as a patchwork of isolated sites. While supporting a vast diversity of plant, animal and invertebrate species, its fragmented nature often denies those species the opportunity to flourish through expanding their range or populations. The fragmentation of priority habitats also extends to ancient woodland, other deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows.

   Wildlife species decline – Many species of birds, butterflies, plants and mammals that were once common across the National Landscape, remain in serious decline despite past initiatives that showed considerable success in increasing numbers.

3. Valuing the benefits we receive from the natural environment – There is a need to demonstrate that the natural environment provides benefits of measurable value to society and everyone understands those values (explored further in Chapter 13, Wellbeing, Involvement and Learning.

4. Unintended consequences – generalised conservation measures, such as tree and hedge planting, applied without attention to the landscape character and local situation can also priority habitats and provide cover for predators.

5. Limited means to conserve and enhance natural environment, habitats and species - through close working relationships with farmers and landowners over the years, the will to conserve certainly exists; the combination of time, knowledge or experience to undertake necessary work may not necessarily always be present (explored further in Chapter 9 Rural Land Management and Chapter 13, Wellbeing, Involvement and Learning. Over and above national agri-environment schemes and special initiatives (eg Farming in Protected Landscape or Species Recovery Scheme) there are other means by which the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity may be possible. Each needs ongoing research, investigation and how these might be used in an integrated way:

   - **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) is an approach to development. It makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development took place. In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. BNG is administered by the five Local Planning Authorities of this National Landscape.

[17] Links to the councils' LNRS pages: Wiltshire Council ; Dorset Council ; Hampshire ; Somerset

Some of the Local Planning Authorities have set BNG at 20% in an attempt to secure increased biodiversity gain. There are 3 ways a developer can achieve BNG; this is known as the BNG gain hierarchy:

- They can create biodiversity on-site (within the red line boundary of a development site).
- If developers cannot achieve all of their BNG on-site, they can deliver through a mixture of on-site and off-site. Developers can either make off-site biodiversity gains on their own land outside the development site or buy off-site biodiversity units on the market.
- If developers cannot achieve on-site or off-site BNG, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits from the government. This should be a last resort. The government will use the revenue to invest in habitat creation in England. There are also exemptions to the provision of BNG and this National Landscape's Position Statement on the subject seeks to ensure any development contributes to BNG.

- **Green finance** is a relatively new term that refers to the private financing of environmental projects. This can mean any number of things from a single one-off trade to a longer-term investment that earns returns. Traditionally, environmental projects are funded through finite pots of money that might be one-off grants or funding schemes with fixed end dates. The problem with this is quite obviously the lack of longevity. We can lose the often-hard-won benefits of restoration work if the resources are not there to maintain them. Private investment could help more to be done over a much longer period. Green finance can be complex and the National Landscape team and partnership needs to investigate the potential of green finance more fully in the near future.
- **Conservation covenants** are private, voluntary agreements between a landowner and a 'designated, responsible body' to deliver lasting conservation benefits by ensuring the protection of natural or heritage features on the land for public good. Again, these conservation covenants need further research by the National Landscape team to assess the exact requirements and whether conservation covenants might be an avenue to pursue for conservation gain.

6. Alien species, pests, and pathogens – These pose risks to native wildlife and increase uncertainty for all land managers.
7. Government's Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-27 has seen the introduction of the Environmental Land Management Scheme with an overall aim of enhancing nature recovery, together with improved animal welfare and tackling the effects of climate change. The Environmental Land Management Scheme is covered more fully in the Rural Land Management chapter but being based on the ethos of 'public goods for public money' the potential to provide greatly enhanced biodiversity is a key driver of the new scheme.
8. The new and dynamic nature of these grant schemes and their introduction over the past few years has led to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty for many in the farming sector (explored further in Chapter 9, Rural Land Management).
9. A significant proportion of the River Avon System is within the National Landscape. It holds two Natura 2000 sites; the Hampshire Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Avon Valley

Special Protection Area (SPA). Agricultural and septic tank diffuse pollution can be an issue to address in rivers across the whole landscape.

The Issues Explained

5.5. Local Nature Recovery Strategies – The four LNRSs are not yet, at the time of writing, published for Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. The LNRSs will help guide funding, particularly via Biodiversity Net Gain payments, towards those areas best able to benefit. The four Responsible Authorities are keen to ensure their Strategies reflect the Nature Recovery Plan for the National Landscape and equally the latter needs to align with similar priorities to the LNRSs. The national landscape team have been involved in the collaborative process of preparing these strategies for each council. Their involvement has ensured key points from the national landscape's own nature recovery plan and management plan are reflected in the LNRS, which will support greater partnership working and focus on delivering a shared vision for nature recovery. Each are being developed at different Landscape Character scales however, hence the need to avoid conflicting priorities for nature recovery. The National Landscape and the Responsible Bodies need to work in a reciprocal way to ensure nature recovery plans remain aligned.

5.6. It must be remembered that the apportioned targets in the PLTOF for increasing wildlife rich habitats outside protected sites and increasing tree canopy and woodland, are for Cranborne Chase National Landscape as a place and not for the National Landscape Partnership and team themselves. As a non-landowning entity, the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership can encourage, advise and guide decisions of those who own and/or manage land. It can also input to the development of ELMS options together with any future new funding mechanisms and highlight instances where options are not having the desired effect. It is imperative that close collaboration and liaison is developed between the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership and all those owning land to move towards achieving those targets whilst conserving and enhancing the landscape character and special qualities of this area.

5.7. The chalk grasslands and rivers of the National Landscape, with their rare wildlife, are of international importance. A significant proportion of the woodland is of ancient origin and the area contains some of the best stands of ancient trees in Europe. The extensive tracts of arable land support islands of rare arable plants and can be a stronghold for farmland birds. However, the areas of habitat favouring these important species are often fragmented and isolated. Wildlife habitats need to be big enough and sufficiently well connected for wildlife to thrive. Species need corridors to move through the landscape in response to a changing environment.

5.8. During past decades, management regimes that were focused on creating higher crop yields have led to habitat change and the loss of wildlife. Since the 1970s, the UK populations of many of our farmland birds have been in steep decline. In the south-west, farmland bird numbers fell by 45% between 1970 and 1994; and a further 8% between 1994 and 2007. Though the current rate of decline is not as steep as during the 1970s and 1980s, a short-term decline of 9% since 2010 shows that farmland birds, and especially farmland specialists, are still in trouble. For example, Turtle Dove numbers have declined by 93% since 1994 and may well be at risk of global extinction. However, the results from the Farmland Bird Project referenced above in Key Achievements show that with targeted management of sufficient habitats, reversing the decline is possible.

5.9. Even once common species are also suffering unprecedented and drastic declines. Hedgehog numbers have plummeted by over 50% since 1994, voles by 30% over the last ten years and dormice are vulnerable to extinction in the UK (see Appendix x). Populations of rare arable plants have declined dramatically over the past 60 years. They are the most critically threatened group of wild plants in the UK. The report, 'Assessing the Distribution of Rare Arable Plants in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (2010)', identifies the important arable plant hotspots and will help refine targeting, surveying and promotion of seminatural habitat restoration, creation and management.

5.10. The four County Environmental Records Centres hold incomplete records for species presence and/or distribution in the National Landscape. Farmer clusters have been frustrated to date by their lack of knowledge of species present on their holdings. The Nurturing Nature project within Chase & Chalke LP Scheme has now actively encouraged the training and involvement of volunteers in identifying, recording and surveying fauna and flora; extending that work across the National Landscape would greatly improve the knowledge base across the area.

5.11. The Lawton review of ecological sites and networks 'Making Space for Nature' advocates for the creation of more effective ecological networks through the establishment of more, bigger, and better-quality wildlife sites that are better connected. This vision remains a key aspiration in this Plan. Most of the land needed to achieve this is currently under some form of agricultural, forestry or game management. It is, therefore, vital that habitat creation, enhancement, and improved connectivity become a part of financially viable land management systems.

5.12. The natural capital of the National Landscape, the elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people such as clean air, clean water, healthy soils, food and recreation, are high in quality and quantity. The Natural Capital Committee is an independent committee that advises the Government on the sustainable use of our natural assets. This committee reported that the elements of the natural environment that provide valuable goods and services to people are in long-term decline. This decline will continue, and is likely to accelerate, unless there is some radical departure from the approaches of the past. This now includes biodiversity net gain (considered in chapter 10 Planning and Transport) as a key planning principle and a landscape-scale / catchment-based approach to conservation. It may also include widespread payments for the services the landscape provides (also known as ecosystem services) or the routine application of natural capital accounting (considered in Chapter 9 Rural Land Management).

5.13. Relatively straightforward agri-environment options such as tree or hedge planting can sometimes take place in inappropriate locations that can lead to a change in landscape character, the reduction or destruction of remnant grassland habitat, and a reduction in the suitability of the area for ground nesting birds. This National Landscape has commissioned a piece of work to site alongside 'Right Tree, Right Place' published in 2023, that looks more closely at 'Trees in the Landscape'; due to be published 2025. This attempts to offer clear guidance on where tree or hedge planting or habitat enhancements are most likely to have beneficial effects whilst conserving and enhancing the landscape character of this National Landscape.

5.14. Evidence from the farmer cluster work, has highlighted the strong desire of landowners and farmers to help conserve and enhance the natural environment. However, effective and timely conservation work might well compete with priority work on the farm. Additional knowledge and experience of conservation techniques needs to be delivered through training opportunities open to farmers and

volunteers and through practical input from conservation professionals, such as rangers, with the assistance of volunteers.

5.15. There is latent demand from communities to become involved in the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural environment. Engagement with countryside management professionals can help protect endangered species, maintain the balance of ecosystems, and raise awareness about the need to preserve biodiversity. Voluntary support is covered further in chapter 13 Wellbeing, Involvement and Learning.

5.16. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership values and advocates the full use of paragraphs 192/193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that set out the principles to protect and enhance biodiversity and when determining planning applications, including net biodiversity gain.

5.17. There is an increase in the number of alien species, pests and pathogens entering the natural environment, with new ones being recorded almost monthly. The Forestry Commission noted at least 30 new pests and diseases affecting livestock, and 15 affecting trees in the UK just a few years ago. These can have a devastating effect on the natural environment and livelihoods. The dangers to woodland from pests and diseases is growing, with Dieback of Ash (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) and Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) two of the most recent examples.

5.18. Dieback of Ash may have a very serious effect on the ash trees in this National Landscape; whilst opinions vary, there is broad consensus that there is a reasonable chance that we will lose a significant portion of ash trees, a substantive loss to our landscapes and heritage. The damage caused by deer and grey squirrels is also of increasing concern, they eat young shoots and strip bark, which can result in tree loss. Missing bark patches are like an open wound that makes a tree more susceptible to infections. These wounds can restrict the future use of the tree and any timber produced, or they may kill the tree.

5.19. Farming requires a profitable future to stay in business, sustain farming families, safeguard and enhance the environment. For centuries, land managers and farmers have incidentally shaped the landscape and environment, including its wildlife, soil and water quality, as they went about their work. If wildlife is to thrive in the National Landscape, farmers and landowners should look to these new schemes below.

5.20. There are now three new schemes to pay for environmental improvements known collectively as the Environmental Land Management Scheme:

- the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) will pay farmers to adopt and maintain sustainable farming practices that can protect and enhance the natural environment alongside food production, and support farm productivity (including by improving animal health and welfare, optimising the use of inputs and making better use of natural resources)
- Countryside Stewardship (CS) will pay for more targeted actions relating to specific locations, features and habitats. There will be an extra incentive through CS Plus for land managers to join up across local areas to deliver improved results

- Landscape Recovery will pay for bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment[18]

Outcomes and Policies

NR A There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature by establishing a coherent and resilient nature recovery network across the National Landscape and its setting.

NR1 Biodiversity in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced by establishing a coherent and resilient nature recovery network across the designated area and in its setting:
• This should be achieved in accordance with the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and focus on the key habitats and species listed as special features in this management plan.
• Strategic documents or initiatives that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should seek to further the Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan. This would include, but is not limited to, the following:
  • Local Plans.
  • Neighbourhood Development Plans.
  • Green Infrastructure Strategies.
  • Tree and Woodland Strategies.
  • Climate Change Strategies.
  • Local Nature Recovery Strategies
• National and local guidance (including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non-Native Species Secretariat) on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted, for example;
  • The population of grey squirrel and deer in the National Landscape should continue to be controlled and managed. This should be undertaken and coordinated at a landscape scale.
  • National guidance on Ash Dieback should be followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.
  • Programmes should be developed at an appropriate scale to control the spread of invasive non-native plants

NR2 All stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for nature recovery within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned targets for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape have been set out at a local level. At the time of publication, the targets are: • Target 1 - Restore or create more than 1,946.8h of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline). • Target 2 - 80% Percent of SSSIs in favourable condition by 2042

[18] A practical guide by Natural England: Nature Networks Evidence Handbook - NERR081

- Target 3 - 60% Percent of SSSIs assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- Target 4 - Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
- Target 5 - 65% to 80% of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.
- Target 8 - Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline) .

Note: changes to targets will be shown in the on-line version of this plan.

NE B The benefits and services provided by the natural environment are understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.

NR3 The natural and cultural capital* of the National Landscape, and the services they provide, should continue to be assessed and evaluated by the responsible authorities:

- The use of natural and cultural capital accounting should inform policy, investment, development and management decisions.
- The financial and non-financial benefits of natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be promoted.
- Continue to build and sustain a robust environmental records base for the National Landscape and its surrounds through expanding the network of biological recorders and transferring their records to the four Environmental Records Centres.

* *the stock of natural and cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) assets*

6. Climate Change

6.1. Since the industrial revolution there has been an increase in the amounts of carbon dioxide (CO_2) we release into the atmosphere. CO_2 is a greenhouse gas (a gas that traps heat). As a result, the earth's temperature is rising at a much faster rate than naturally occurs. This means the earth heats up and this causes long terms changes to the climate. There is now more CO_2 in the atmosphere than at any time in the last two million years. Over the last two centuries it has risen by 40 per cent. Earth temperature has increased by 1 degree centigrade since the mid-1800s[19].

6.2. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports on climate change. Their most recent assessment shows that human activity is the cause of climate change. We are already seeing the impacts of climate change across the globe, with observed increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Even with global targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is still necessary to adapt structures and systems to reduce the impacts of climate change. This includes critical infrastructure, the built and natural environments, water use and food production. In July 2023 the UK government published its third National Adaptation Programme, setting out a commitment to take clear and decisive action over the next 5 years to maintain our country's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

6.3. Climate change mitigation and adaptation are two different but complementary approaches to addressing climate change:

- Mitigation aims to reduce, absorb or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to slow or stop the rise in global temperatures. This can help make the impacts of climate change less severe. Mitigation strategies can include growing trees in places that enhance the landscape character and reducing fossil fuel emissions.
- Adaptation involves adjusting to the current and future effects of climate change by altering systems, behaviours, and ways of life. This can help people and governments protect themselves, their economies, and the environment from the negative effects of climate change, while also taking advantage of any opportunities that arise.

6.4. Temperatures have shown definite trends over the years. The average annual temperatures are now approximately 1.3º C higher than a hundred years ago. New records in all parts of the UK are being set. A warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture that can lead to more intense and frequent downpours.

6.5. The potential change in habitat that comes from changes in climate is significant for the future of many species. This may affect not only their distribution but, for some, their very existence within the National Landscape. Many native tree species cannot germinate, or fruit, without a bout of cold weather. Changes in climate may restrict the distribution of important habitats and keep wildlife populations apart. This will limit their chance to breed. In addition, some species may die if climatic conditions are unfavourable at critical stages in their life cycles. Drier conditions may lead to water shortages, a vital commodity for all wildlife. Changes in climate may allow new species and diseases to colonise the UK. This will sometimes be to the detriment of existing biodiversity, especially if

[19] IPCC, 2023: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1-34, doi: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.001

species are under stress due to changes. Some species may thrive as the climate changes, either due to conditions that are more favourable or because the stress of change makes them more resilient.

6.6. There is a need to develop a landscape that is resilient and adaptable to change. Creating a network of wildlife corridors is crucial. Using species appropriate to changing conditions in any future planting schemes is crucial. Our knowledge of climate change is evolving and land management practices must adapt as new information emerges. There are opportunities to create habitats in key areas to buffer or offset potential losses.

6.7. The National Planning Policy Framework expects the planning system to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure[20].

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to climate change:

- Methane (CH_4) levels in 2022 are below 5 kt CO2e[21] per sq km
- Nitrous oxide (N_2O) levels in 2022 are very low (less than 0.4 kt CO2e per sq km)
- Particulate matter (PM2.5) levels in 2022 levels are relatively low in the area (less than 0.1 tonnes per sq km)
- Sulphur dioxide (SO_2) levels in 2022 are low across the area (less than 0.01 tonnes per sq km)
- The soils in the National Landscape hold the equivalent of 100-150 tonnes of carbon per hectare.
- There is a 91.5-millimetre increase in annual rainfall and a rise of 0.8°C in annual mean temperature over the last 60 years. Recent years are wetter, with the period 1991-2020 having 5.4 more annual days of rainfall than each of the preceding periods.

Ambition

6.8. The National Landscape will be a place where stakeholders are on target to achieve net zero (or better) by 2050 (or sooner) by implementing a clearly defined pathway to net zero and adapting to the consequences of climate change, utilising nature-based solutions wherever possible and whilst also conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the area.

Key issues

6.9. There is a need to enhance nature's ability to store carbon. Nature plays a major role in regulating the climate by storing carbon dioxide. By conserving woodlands and wetlands, permanent pasture, adding regenerative practices to agriculture, we can unleash nature's full potential to stabilise the climate.

6.10. By growing food in ways that support nature, carbon emissions can be greatly reduced. For instance, healthy soils have enormous potential to store carbon. Moves are needed towards planet-friendly food production systems.

[20] National Planning Policy Framework 2024: Paragraph 161
[21] Internation standard for reporting greenhouse gases is in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO2e)

6.11. Restoring habitats that reduce the impact of severe storms can bolster resilience and so help communities adapt to climate change. There is a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the National Landscape through a clearly defined pathway to net zero whilst also adapting to the consequences of climate change. The average annual temperature is now about 1.3º C higher than a hundred years ago[22]. This may lead to short term landscape effects such as drier areas being prone to fires as well as changes in vegetation patterns and agricultural land use that may affect the visual appearance and character of the National Landscape. With a warmer climate, habitats may change. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that will harm native species or competing with the native species for food and shelter. Visitor activity patterns may also change leading to greater erosion of land and heritage assets; and more conflicts with land management. Agriculture may be affected by both droughts and floods.

6.12. The Government has committed to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050[23]. It plans to do this by moving to a more energy efficient, low-carbon economy. Cranborne Chase National Landscape is a deeply rural area and unlikely to be emitting large amounts of CO_2 from any industrial sources although emissions from agriculture may be significant.

6.13. Power generation from renewable sources of energy is an important element in the development of a low-carbon economy. There is a range of technologies available producing electricity, heat or both. Without sensitive location and good design, their use in the National Landscape may well harm the special character of the area, for example through their scale and through the introduction of extraneous, and industrial elements into the landscape. Some technologies, such as large-scale, commercial wind turbines or field scale solar farms, are not appropriate in Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

6.14. Many types of woodland within the National Landscape are either under-managed or not managed at all. A demand for wood fuel could bring more woodland into active management. Conversely, the conversion of grassland into biomass crops would be far less desirable, adding extraneous elements to the landscape that have significant effects. Any tree planting should be in line with the Right Tree, Right Place guidance developed by this National Landscape alongside Trees in the Landscape due early 2025.

Outcomes and Policies

CL A Mitigation actions are taken to help lessen the severity of climate change effects by encouraging the reduction of greenhouse gases and preventing their release into the atmosphere.
CL1 Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through a range of measures, including: • Recognising and highlighting the whole lifecycle carbon footprint in policies and decision making associated with housing and any other development proposals • Recognising the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the destruction or removal of soil and vegetation for development. • Reducing energy demand in existing and new buildings and infrastructure

2 Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, HMSO October 2021

	• Reducing energy demand by supporting the transition to zero emission vehicles and public transport options and active travel[24] • Generating energy from low carbon sources only in a manner consistent with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the National Landscape designation • Supporting the development of various initiatives such as community food and heat networks, linking farmers and businesses to each other and consumers; Green Infrastructure plans, promoting the purchase of locally produced food products and services and encouraging small-scale vegetable growing in gardens and allotments.
	CL2 Climate change mitigation, including the role natural systems play in carbon sequestration, should be a key component of land management practices and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape, using accepted forms of emissions calculations
	CL3 Climate action should be undertaken in ways that must seek to further, and is compatible with, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
	CL4 Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for climate change within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned targets for Cranborne Chase National Landscape to be achieved are: • Target 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels. • Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).
CL B Systems, behaviours and ways of life in the National Landscape are adapted to help people and the environment withstand the current and future effects of climate change.	
	CL5 Climate change adaptation should be a significant driver in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision.
	CL6 Climate change adaptation should be a key component of land management practices and agri-environment/rural development support mechanisms, in the National Landscape
	CL7 By the end of 2028, the National Landscape Partnership will adopt a Climate Change Adaptation Plan that: i. Identifies the key assets and features of the landscape. ii. Assesses the vulnerability of these assets and features to the impacts of Climate Change. iii. Considers sectoral impacts for principal land uses such as farming and forestry, as well as the natural, built and historic environment. iv. Assesses the impacts based upon current climate change projections.

[24] Active travel: increasing levels of walking and cycling in England https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1487/148704.htm

	v. Scores these risks and opportunities based on their likelihood, impact and risk over the short, medium and long term. vi. Identifies possible high-level mitigation actions. vii. Identifies existing policy responses and identify any gaps. viii. Identifies relevant local stakeholders that can support or lead the action. ix. Assesses the acceptability of these options, their interdependencies, and potential barriers to delivery. x. Sets out planned actions for the short, medium and long term. On adoption, the Climate Change Adaptation Plan will be embedded within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan.

7. Water

7.1. The Water Framework Directive (WFD)[25] requires the preparation and publication of river basin management plans; the setting of environmental objectives for groundwater and surface waters and the devising and implementing of programmes of measures to meet those objectives. Under the WFD Regulations, a river basin management plan must be developed for each river basin district and reviewed and updated every six years. The river basin management plans also tackle the climate and biodiversity crises to ensure a sustainable water supply and mitigate the effects of natural hazards such as floods and drought.

7.2. The National Landscape lies mainly within the catchments of the River Avon and River Stour. Several rivers and streams run through the National Landscape such as the Frome, Wylye, Nadder, Sem, Ebble, Stour, Allen and Moors. There are approximately 320 kms of chalk streams that run through the National Landscape.

7.3. The rivers of the AONB, particularly in the catchment of the Hampshire Avon, are some of the finest trout streams in the world, valued highly by fishermen. However, climate change and other factors threaten this heritage and the benefits that flow from it. Water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic; or too much water can be abstracted. In addition, diffuse pollution occurs through poor land management practices, reducing water quality

7.4. A significant proportion of the River Avon System is within the AONB. It holds two Natura 2000 sites; the Hampshire Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Avon Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). The Hampshire Avon was one of four demonstration test catchments in England, a Government-funded project designed to study how to control diffuse pollution from agriculture to improve and maintain water quality in rural river catchments areas.

7.5. There has already been much good work undertaken such as the river restoration work of the Wessex Chalk Streams Project. Additionally, the Wessex Rivers Trust continues to be very active in its river restoration work delivering innumerable benefits to water quality and conservation. Much more remains to be achieved however, if our world-class fisheries are to be sustainable in the face of climate change and other challenges.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to water

- The National Landscape lies mainly within two main river catchments (Avon and Stour). In the north west of the National Landscape water drains into the River Frome and a small element to the River Brue.
- 320 kms of clear chalk rivers and streams
- A network of streams, ponds and wetland areas
- Internationally important streams and rivers supporting wild trout, grayling, dace and chub, together with the fast-disappearing water vole and aquatic species that rely on high quality water such as the white-clawed crayfish, seriously threatened by the introduction of non-native crayfish

[25] The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (referred to as WFD Regulations) provides a framework for managing the water environment in England.

Key issues

1. The Environment Agency reports on the ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within the National Landscape[26].
2. The proportion of pollutants from wastewater and sewage, agriculture, and towns, villages and roads vary across and within the different river catchments. A significant issue caused by a combination of new development and lack of investment in waste water treatment is sewage treatment works operating beyond their designed capacity. The issue is exacerbated by ground and surface water ingress. The result is storm overflow discharges releasing untreated sewage into the watercourses.
3. New developments often lead to less permeable surfaces and more surface water running into the sewers. Reduction in storm overflows is complex, but sustainable urban drainage has a part to play to reduce overflows.
4. Storm overflows may run for a few hours or days but phosphorous from sewage treatment works, even during normal operation, is a constant. Downstream flooding may increase. The need for alternative drainage such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments is likely to increase to meet environmental challenges such as climate change and population growth.

Keys Issues explained

7.6. Challenges such as climate change and population growth will need to be addressed regarding water drainage and quality. Provision for SuDS and the national standards required for their design, construction, maintenance and operation is included in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Sustainable drainage systems are drainage solutions that provide an alternative to the direct channelling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses. Diffuse pollution from towns, villages and roads comes from run-off, commerce e.g. car washes, drainage misconnections e.g. domestic appliances connected to the surface water network and inappropriate disposal of domestic materials.

7.7. Sewage and diffuse pollution contain nutrients, chemicals including heavy metals, pathogens, microplastics and sediment resulting in eutrophication, loss of biodiversity, risks to human health, increased cost of water treatment and harm to tourism and recreation.

7.8. Often driven by rainfall and how land is managed, agricultural diffuse pollution occurs when nutrients, pesticides, faecal bacteria, chemicals and fine sediments are lost from the land into local water courses and groundwater. Risks occur when:

- fertilisers and pesticides are spread at the wrong time or too close to a water course;
- cultivation takes place too close to a watercourse and/or there is no adequate buffer strip so increasing the risk of soil loss or field runoff getting straight into water courses;
- soil loss occurs around water courses and sedimentation covers gravels and surfaces that may be used, by example, for invertebrates and fish; and
- slurry or dung enters water bodies or courses, these risks creating polluting runoff, wastes valuable nutrients, and cost money.

[26] Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - Additional statistic 5: Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes © Environment Agency copyright and database rights 2024.

7.9. The water courses in the National Landscape are important for nature and for people. They provide a range of habitats that rely on specific water flow and levels. However, some stretches of the area's water courses are already prone to low flows, resulting in damage to riverine habitat, concentration of pollutants and less water for abstraction. Over-abstraction can have a detrimental impact on these factors. Summers are predicted to become drier, which would exacerbate this problem even further. The Corfe Mullen to Salisbury Transfer Main Scheme was undertaken by Wessex Water 2016 onwards in response to this threat of reduced abstraction.

7.10. The National Landscape is not, at present, an area widely prone to flooding. However, in extreme rainfall events, some villages have been affected by flooding from rivers or because of limited drainage. Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding and the frequency of such extreme rainfall events. It will also give rise to sustained hot and dry periods which can devastate aquatic life.

7.11. The water courses that flow downstream through the National Landscape can play a key role in helping to reduce flood risk downstream. Natural flood management works with natural processes to 'slow the flow' of flood waters, for example through 'leaky' or 'debris' dams. Several 'leaky dams' have been funded through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. This helps to reduce the maximum water height of a flood (the 'flood peak') and/or delay the arrival of the flood peak downstream, increasing the time available to prepare for floods. Sustainable drainage systems, and ecological river restoration projects are important components of natural flood management.

7.12. There are some large water bodies within the National Landscape, such as at Wardour, Crichel, Longleat and Stourhead but with the anticipated drier summers and wetter winters, there is likely to be an increased demand for rainwater harvesting and storage. The need for reliable sources of water for agriculture may grow and it is recognised that winter storage of water can benefit local wildlife, not least by reducing the need for abstraction from water courses. There may be a desire to create bodies of water for irrigation. Care in the scale, siting and design of such features is essential if they are to fit well into the landscape, appear natural, and make a valuable overall contribution to the National Landscape.

Outcomes and Policies

WA A The water stored, particularly in the chalk aquifers, and flowing within and from the National Landscape is clean and safe, helping to restore nature, improve people's health and well-being, and contribute to the local economy; flooding is managed in harmony with nature.	
	WA1 Water resources should be carefully and legally managed and conserved to the highest of standards within this National Landscape to: • improve water quality; • ensure adequate aquifer recharge; • ensure adequate flows; • avoid flooding; and • contribute to natural flood management systems.
	WA2 Development (new and existing sites) must assess and minimise flood risk and implement sustainable drainage schemes, adopt high water efficiency standards in line with RIBA 2030 Climate

	Challenge targets, and water conservation measures, for example rainwater harvesting and/or water recycling and grey water systems.
	WA3 Sewage pollution from storm overflows and continuous outfalls must be minimised and be well within legal and regulatory requirements.
	WA4 Practical opportunities to improve water quality should be implemented including: • The restoration of water courses and wetland habitats. • New wetland habitats could be sited to intercept runoff from roads and reedbeds could be created to filter potentially polluted water from settlements before it is discharged to rivers: i. Minimising soil erosion and run off by implementing soil conservation measures. ii. Minimising pesticide and fertiliser use and implementing measures to reduce pollution from agriculture. iii. Promote individual measures and behaviours in the home and workplace that protect water volume and quality in rivers. iv. Citizen science programmes to monitor water quality.

8. Historic and Cultural Heritage

8.1. The way the land has been used over the centuries has influenced the character of the landscapes we see around us today. The remnants and artefacts of working life, together with the layout of settlements, routeways, and buildings, contribute to the historic character of an area. This includes buried archaeology, buildings, designed landscapes and cultural features. Many acclaimed writers, artists, poets and photographers are associated with this NL.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to the historic and cultural heritage:

- A landscape etched with the imprint of the past - visible archaeological features including prehistoric earthworks, former settlements, field systems, water meadows, Roman roads and Ackling Dyke.
- The former Medieval hunting areas of Selwood Forest, Grovely Forest, and the Cranborne Chase.
- A rich legacy of landscape scale prehistoric archaeological features such as the Neolithic Dorset Cursus, as well as later historic features including the Saxon Bokerley Dyke.
- Historic borderlands, with important Saxon and even Roman roots, once marginal land and often subject to late enclosure.
- A rich land use history, with areas that have a concentration of ancient enclosure, ancient woodland, and former common land.
- An historic settlement pattern (pre1750), which has seen minimal infilling, associated with a dense concentration of historic listed buildings.
- A concentration of historic parklands, estates, and manor houses together with Historic Parks and Gardens of national and county importance.
- Literary, artistic and historic connections of national and international distinction.
- Huge potential for previously undiscovered features.

Ambition

8.2. The historic and cultural environment of the National Landscape is conserved and enhanced. Everyone understands, values and enjoys its cultural and heritage assets. The story of the area's evolution over time is clear to all.

Key Achievements

- Publications – Historic England continues to promote our Historic Landscape Characterisation 2008, and the subsequent Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) 2012, as exemplar documents. These provide an evolving targeted framework for ongoing historic environment action and a dedicated web site.
- Volunteer engagement – building on the former success of the Foundations of Archaeology project, the Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme (2019-24), the 'Champions of the Past' project

has seen over 200 volunteers sign up and undergo training in understanding and interpreting LiDAR images of the Chase & Chalke area (covering a third of the National Landscape). This project will continue after the Scheme ends, spreading out to look at the whole of the National Landscape.

- Well attended seminars – Events exploring different aspects of the historic and archaeological treasures of the National Landscape, such as the Dorset Cursus offered opportunities to hear well renowned speakers. The event was oversubscribed.
- The Heritage Schools project within Chase and Chalke LP Scheme trained nearly 20 teachers in how to recognise and investigate local heritage sites or features close to their schools, giving them the tools to develop engaging heritage sessions with their classes.
- Churches database – all the parish churches of the NL have been visited, described, and photographed by an academic consultant.
- Somerset Council have undertaken an intensive consultation to establish an accountable system to create a Local List of Heritage Assets whilst Dorset Council has engaged consultants in a data sieving exercise with a similar objective. Hopefully these will lead the way in providing protection for heritage assets of regional or county significance that do not quite make the national listings.
- Input to planning – Consultation responses have influenced the drafting of national and local planning policy. Advice given to planning authorities on proposals affecting heritage assets has been effective.

Key issues

1. Knowledge and subsequent appreciation of the historic environment is growing - The National Landscape has a vast and precious historic heritage. Greater knowledge and promotion of this heritage legacy will underpin practical action to conserve and enhance it. The Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme raised the profile of many cultural characters and the artistic heritage through nine projects focussing on infamous characters, poetry, music and artistic talent through involvement of the public in participatory events and activities.
2. In some areas of the National Landscape however, there remains limited awareness of the contribution of art, literature and folklore to local identity – Heywood Sumner, Thomas Hardy, Desmond Hawkins, Cecil Beaton, Lucien Freud and Elisabeth Frink all took inspiration from Cranborne Chase and its hinterland. There is a profusion of authors, broadcasters, musicians, sculptors, photographers and artists closely connected to this National Landscape, both in the past and today. For many, their work is either little known or not widely enough appreciated by resident and visitor communities.
3. Heritage at Risk – The National Landscape has heritage assets that Historic England considers to be vulnerable or ‘at Risk’. There is a need for partners to take practical action to conserve and enhance these assets. There is a sparse record of historic farmsteads, especially those not recognised by the Listed Building processes.
4. Inappropriate management of the historic environment – Ploughing, planting or unsuitable grazing can seriously damage historic sites and features. Ancient and veteran trees are found within wood pastures, historic parkland, hedgerows, orchards, parks or other areas. They are often found outside ancient woodlands. They have biodiversity, cultural and heritage value (see chapter 5 for Nature Recovery).

5. Funding for the historic environment – Pressure on specific funds to safeguard and enhance the historic environment is high. Some funding for this area of work has been offered through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, offered within all Protected Landscapes since mid-2021 but funding remains generally difficult to find. Funding may be possible through Historic England grants and Countryside Stewardship.

The Issues Explained

8.3. Awareness of sources of information on historic resources remains limited. There is a need to promote better awareness of Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) as a key source (while acknowledging that these often record some types of heritage better than others, so other sources should also be used). The 'Buildings at Risk' register of Historic England is not widely known nor its local relevance appreciated. There is not a record of all the historic sites. Those sites without records are almost certainly being damaged or lost. The partner LPAs can prepare local lists of heritage assets which have protection in the planning processes, but that does not guarantee that those assets will be actively conserved.

8.4. The HEAPs identify ways in which the National Landscape can work with the Historic Environment Records (HERs) to enhance knowledge and understanding, for example for the Medieval and Post Medieval period and in woodland. It also identifies areas where the significance of particular heritage is not well known.

8.5. Government has recently extended the 'special' regard to Listed Buildings when considering development proposals to Registered Historic Parks and Gardens [s.102 LURA 2023] so there is now added protection to those elements of our landscapes.

8.6. There is a need for greater knowledge of the location and importance of the heritage assets of the NL. The ongoing promotion of the Historic Landscape Characterisation, HEAPs and Champions of the Past (LiDAR) project can help deal with this.

8.7. The HERs in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire are an essential source of information for managing, caring for and understanding the historic environment. They select and present information on all known heritage assets. These include landscapes, buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas and archaeological finds. There is also information on previous archaeological and heritage work in each county. No such record is ever complete.

8.8. The quality of information about, and interpretation of, the historic environment of the National Landscape can continue to be improved through Champions of the Past project of Chase & Chalke. There is a wealth of historic riches throughout the area; a visible legacy of human involvement with the landscape through time.

8.9. One aim of the NLHF funded Chase & Chalke LP Scheme was to support wide-ranging, innovative and inspiring volunteer engagement through projects such as Champions of the Past, Heritage Schools, Curious Dorset Cursus, the Communities Caring for Heritage grant scheme and the augmented reality Time Traveller App. These projects invited involvement, enjoyment and learning from the widest range of audiences throughout 2019-24 and its legacy will be to continue this engagement into the future. Projects also provided a range of opportunities for people to get involved in practical tasks such as ground-truthing the LiDAR and taking part in archaeologist led digs, encouraging meaningful learning about the historic and cultural heritage of the area.

8.10. Nevertheless, the National Landscape needs to access more resources to develop educational and interpretative media across the whole area to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of this National Landscape's historic and cultural environment.

8.11. The landscapes of the National Landscape are an expression of the interaction between people and the land over thousands of years. Every part of these landscapes has a history that contributes to the special qualities of this Protected Area. The landscapes of the National Landscape bear the mark of successive periods of human activity. This is one of the richest and most closely studied parts of prehistoric Wessex. It was the haunt of General Pitt-Rivers, Heywood Sumner, Richard Bradley and today, Martin Green of Down Farm, which the Dorset Cursus traverses.

8.12. Important literary figures associated with the area include poet and barrister Sir John Davies, naturalist and writer W H Hudson, and author and broadcaster Desmond Hawkins, amongst many. Thomas Hardy based some scenes of Tess of the d'Urbervilles in Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Other artistic and cultural connections include the architect Sir Christopher Wren and renowned photographer, designer, socialite, writer, Sir Cecil Beaton.

8.13. The work of Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Ben Nicholson, John Craxton, Lucian Freud, Stanley Spencer, Elisabeth Frink, William Nicholson and over 25 other artists connected with Cranborne Chase have been celebrated as part of an exhibition at Salisbury Museum. The Museum states that artists 'have found in Cranborne Chase and its hinterland a landscape of inspiration, seclusion and 'bare-boned' beauty'; and that the National Landscape 'has always had an air of isolation which has attracted an exceptional array of artists and writers'.

Nationally designated heritage in the National Landscape

8.14. Designation is a way of marking that a building, monument or landscape is of 'special architectural or historic interest' in a national context. Historic England makes the recommendation for designation. It is a stage that identifies a site as being architecturally or historically important before any planning stage that may decide its future.

8.15. In 2023, in the National Landscape there were:

- 402 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- 2,064 Listed Buildings, 78 of which are Grade I and 108 Grade II*.
- 18 Registered Parks and Gardens.

8.16. When Historic England says that a Listed Grade I or II* Building is 'at risk', they mean it is vulnerable through neglect or decay rather than alteration or demolition. This leads to the 'At Risk' Register. Historic England prepares and publishes an annual Register of Heritage at Risk of those nationally designated heritage assets that are at risk of being lost through neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

8.17. In 2023, in the National Landscape there were:

- 3 Buildings at Risk.
- 59 Monuments at Risk.
- 0 Parks and Gardens at Risk.

8.18. Some local authorities produce their own registers that record all buildings and structures 'at risk', irrespective of grade. As Historic England (formerly English Heritage) only lists Grades I, II* and II in the Register of Heritage at Risk, the total number of buildings or structures 'at risk' is much greater than the register might at first suggest.

Local heritage designations and records

- 56 designated Conservation Areas.
- 16 Historic Parks and Gardens of county importance.
- Historic designed landscapes of local importance.
- The four County Archaeological Services record and protect the archaeology within the National Landscape, and each maintains an Historic Environment Record/Sites and Monuments Record.

8.19. The Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPS) identify the key issues affecting the heritage assets of the National Landscape. They summarise the key characteristics of the historic environment at a landscape scale. They set out the significance, condition and pressures affecting the heritage assets, including those 'at risk'. They identify the actions needed to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These provide the central actions to enable the National Landscape partners to conserve and enhance its historic environment assets.

8.20. Incorrect ploughing of land can destroy buried and extant archaeological features. Lack of grazing leads to the development of scrub. Historic sites are harder to recognise when overgrown and are prone to severe root damage if trees or shrubs establish themselves. Overgrazing can cause erosion and destroy sites. Burrowing animals, such as badgers and rabbits, can damage underground remains. Planting and harvesting trees and energy crops may also cause damage to sites. Badly designed buildings and structures may spoil the setting of many sites and monuments. The historic cohesion of the landscape may be lost.

8.21. Funding - Historic England commissioned a research report in 2019 to review the issues facing local authorities as they manage their heritage assets at a time of acute financial stress. The funding available through both Historic England and Local Authorities has greatly diminished over recent years. The research found a wide variation in the ways that local authorities manage their heritage properties. It describes the issues that are affecting them, including the economic downturn, declining budgets, changing patterns of use and fewer conservation officers.

8.22. Some external funding programmes target the historic environment. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has recently reviewed its funding programmes within a new Strategy to 2033. There will no doubt be intensive competition to all funding programmes which may lead to insufficient funding to fully protect and conserve the historic wealth of this National Landscape. The Chase & Chalke LP Scheme, as mentioned earlier, has begun to greatly increase understanding of the historic and cultural heritage and has directed relatively small amounts towards its protection.

Outcomes and Policies

HE A By the end of the Plan period, we will ensure that the historic environment, cultural heritage and traditions of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape are much better understood; and are being valued and celebrated by all.

	HE1 Promote opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the historic environment using existing resources such as: • Historic Environment Records • Conservation Area Appraisals • Historic Landscape Characterisation • Historic Environment Action Plans and • Heritage Assessments. These should be used to improve the identification, recording and management of the distinctive historic landscapes of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and encourage positive action regarding the management of the National Landscape's historic environment and cultural heritage.
	HE2 Promote greater public understanding of, and engagement with, the conservation of the historic environment of the National Landscape and celebrate it in arts, cultural, and social activities across the area.
HE B The historic and cultural heritage of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape is conserved and enhanced by all those whose work programmes may affect it.	
	HE3 Proposals that are likely to impact on the historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape should be compatible with, and seek to further, the conservation and enhancement of these heritage assets and their setting. This should include: • seeking to sustain and enhance the significance, and minimising any harm to, the area's historic assets. • respecting the historical elements of landscape character including features such as; buildings, sites, archaeological monuments, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape. • ensuring the sustainable use of historic buildings and other heritage assets, particularly those identified as being at risk.
	HE4 Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for heritage assets within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The apportioned targets for Cranborne Chase to be achieved are: • Target 10 - Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

9. Dark Night Skies

9.1. Cranborne Chase National Landscape has the darkest night skies in central southern England. The awe-inspiring Milky Way can be readily viewed here; something that over 90% of the UK population can rarely see due to light pollution. Unlike ancient historic settlements, rivers, soils, wildlife, and our outstanding landscapes, the night sky has no legal protection, which explains why, in just six years, light pollution has increased by 24% across the UK.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to dark night skies:

- Cranborne Chase National Landscape is one of the darkest places in England.
- Dark night skies with a myriad of visible stars have always been an outstanding, memorable and remarkable feature of this National Landscape.
- A topography that facilitates stargazing with open, elevated downland, wide panoramic, unobstructed views all with relatively easy public access.
- Lack of major towns and a low NL population limits the incidence of light pollution and sky glow.
- Cranborne Chase National Landscape was designated the 14th International Dark Sky Reserve in October 2019.

Ambition

9.2. Everyone aims to maintain the International Dark Sky Reserve status in perpetuity, continuing to reduce light pollution into the future to enhance further the night-time environment for the benefit of human health and wildlife. It will also reduce expenditure and carbon emissions from unnecessary lighting, and offering new opportunities for education and regenerative rural tourism.

Key achievements

- International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) status was achieved in October 2019. The International Dark Sky Reserve protects an area possessing exceptional starry nights and nocturnal environment for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment.
- The prevention and avoidance of light pollution has been consistently inputted to national and local planning policy consultations and detailed development management advice since the 2008 Position Statement on Light Pollution.
- The first specialist, dark night skies and good lighting National Landscape Planning Seminar was held in 2014, another in 2018 whilst an Annual Forum was held in association with the coordinator for the British Astronomical Association's Commission for Dark Skies.
- Good Lighting Guides were provided by the National Landscape Team and Commission for Dark Skies in 2016; a Developers' Guide to Good Lighting was added in 2018.
- Partnerships have been established with the British Astronomical Association, Wessex Astronomical Society, Fordingbridge Astronomers, Starquest Astronomy Club and Cranborne Chase Astronomy Club to record sky darkness, facilitate events, and promote good lighting practice. 10 public stargazing sites have been negotiated with landowners and promoted through this 'Chasing Stars' initiative.

- Sky Quality Meter (SQM) readings have been taken throughout the National Landscape since 2015 and on a more systematic square kilometre grid basis from 2017 to 2022 to map the darkest areas of the area. From 2023 the DarkSky International protocol, which requires a maximum of 12 locations, has been used.
- Since being designated as an international Dark Sky Reserve, except for "Covid winter", a minimum of six public stargazing evenings per year have been scheduled and Annual StarFests have been held. The Dark Night Skies team has exhibited at festivals and fairs and given talks and seminars. The Chase & Chalke team has arranged for 'Space Detectives' workshops to be delivered to schools. From 2021 to 2023, more than 10,000 people were reached by these activities.
- Some LPAs now consistently place conditions on planning approvals that ensure new lighting complies with National Landscape Partnership guidance, which echoes Commission for Dark Skies and International Dark-sky Association (IDA) best practice.

Key issues

1. Exposure to artificial light at night presents significant risks to human health – Humans evolved with the rhythms of the natural light-dark cycle of day and night. Natural light helps set our clocks to Earth's 24-hour day-night cycle. Exposure to artificial light at night disrupts this process, increasing our risks for cancers and other potentially deadly diseases. Glare from poorly shielded outdoor lighting limits our ability to see. Aging eyes are especially affected
2. Outdoor lighting impacts wildlife, especially in or near sensitive habitats – Bad lighting policies can have lethal consequences for wildlife but good policies can maintain healthy ecosystems. Nocturnal habitats do not receive the same attention as daytime habitats.
3. Producing artificial light consumes energy – Promoting dark skies can reduce energy consumption and promote efficient outdoor lighting technologies. There is a need to influence the types and levels of outdoor lighting installed in the National Landscape.
4. Poorly designed and/or installed outdoor lighting is a hazard to motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians in transit at night – The same policies that keep night-time skies dark reduce glare and put the right amount of light in the right place and at the right time to ensure the safety of all.
5. Over-lighting outdoor spaces at night can create favourable conditions for crimes of opportunity – Bright flood lighting creates shadows that can mask a crime. Policies that protect dark skies enhance security by reducing glare and preserving night-sight.
6. Dazzle, glare and light spilling in all directions reduces the visibility of the stars and hence the opportunities to perceive a special part of the environment.
7. Awareness and understanding of the implications of seeking IDSR status needs to be raised – People living and working in the area need to be a part of this initiative. Although large parts of the area remain free from light pollution, the gradual encroachment of street, house and security lights means that starlight, which may have travelled for hundreds or even millions of years to reach our eyes, is stolen at the last moment - by sky-glow. The ongoing information and engagement programme aims to reach a consensus for limits and controls on outside lighting.

8. An absence of detailed lighting policies within current Local Plans can be a barrier to LPAs implementing good lighting practice when determining planning applications. However, some lighting issues (Permitted Development / installation of blinds) fall outside planning control.
9. Planning consultants and developers need to adopt good lighting practices as standard.
10. The significant potential to attract and increase additional astro-tourism visitors to this National Landscape, particularly in the 'shoulder' and winter months, is not fully appreciated.

The Issues Explained

9.3. Whilst awareness and understanding of the multiple benefits of IDSR status is increasing, the potential improvements to human health, an enhanced environment for nocturnal wildlife, financial savings, carbon emission reductions and a much-enhanced tourism offer requires ongoing promotion.

9.4. The advent of LEDs, which offer welcome and considerable cost and energy savings to domestic and business users, can emit a harsh, bright white light with a substantial blue element within it that can often dazzle onlookers, and if fixtures are incorrectly fitted, emit this unnecessary light upwards and sideways.

9.5. Some of the LPAs are including conditions regarding lighting issues in line with the National Landscape's policies on lighting and others have yet to put this in motion. The Local/Development Plans for the five Local Authorities cover different time periods. This means some may be willing to consider adding specific lighting policies relatively quickly whilst others suggest they are not able to do so for some time.

9.6. The highway authorities in Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire each operate light dimming schemes. Dorset has a highway policy of no lights in rural areas except in special situations (for example, at major traffic junctions) and a policy that restricts upwards and sideways emission of light. Wiltshire highway lights are now all IDSR compliant.

9.7. Many planning consultants and developers are unaware of the light pollution caused through ill-designed lighting schemes. The Institution of Lighting Professionals has developed guidance dedicated solely to excellence in lighting. Plans for new developments frequently comprise floor to ceiling glass 'walls', and roof lights are not automatically fitted with blinds or louvres; understanding of the need for these to prevent night-time emission of light pollution needs to be increased.

9.8. DarkSky International requires <500 lumens (equating roughly to a 60W incandescent bulb), or fully shielded fittings to limit sideways and upwards light spill, preferably incorporating an infrared motion sensor, in a Dark Sky Reserve. Much of the outside, security lighting utilised on both domestic and business premises is not currently IDA compliant, with many unshielded fittings and lamps/ bulbs emitting higher than the required 500 lumens.

9.9. Another factor contributing to unwanted light spill can be the inappropriate installation of light fixtures. They should be angled downwards to only light the area to be illuminated. This requires fixtures to only shine light below the horizontal. The National Landscape has developed a 'Big Dipper' campaign to encourage people to make existing and future exterior lighting compliant with Dark Sky Reserve principles.

Outcomes and Policies

DNS A Protect and enhance the night-time environment and dark skies across the Cranborne Chase National Landscape so that current and future generations can experience the wonder and tranquillity of a truly dark sky, and to benefit wildlife and human health.

DNS1 All stakeholders should actively seek to retain International Dark Sky Reserve status through the continuous improvements to lighting/retrofitting schemes. Lighting schemes should be kept to a minimum and only installed where it is necessary.

The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership will:

- Submit an annual report of activities to maintain the International Dark Sky Reserve status.
- Support parish councils in promoting good practice lighting to their residents and businesses, offering Dark Sky Friendly Parish Awards.
- Investigate the potential for sponsorship/ provision of low-cost good practice outside light fittings within the National Landscape

DNS2 Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies and tranquillity of the National Landscape should be delivered in a way that is compatible with, and seek to further, the conservation and enhancement of these dark skies, by seeking to avoid and, where avoiding is not possible, minimise lighting.

- Such proposals should have regard to, and be compatible with, best practice standards and guidance, in particular the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Guidance on Lighting[27] as well as that published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals, the Bat Conservation Trust and the Commission for Dark Skies.
- The Local Authorities should embed good practice lighting guidance within their Local Plans and require substantial lighting schemes, such as those for schools, businesses and sports areas, to be competently designed to meet Dark Night Sky and other environmental criteria.

DNS B The multiple benefits of dark night skies are understood, valued and enjoyed by all.

DNS3 Actively promote the benefits of International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) status to all partners and communities to elicit appropriate action and support for the IDSR.

- Support tourism and related businesses to jointly promote, and benefit from, the area as a prime destination for stargazing holidays. Continue to implement a Dark-Sky Friendly Accreditation Scheme for local tourism and allied businesses.
- Develop a Cranborne Chase National Landscape observatory to offer regular stargazing activities together with educational and study opportunities for residents, visitors and schools. Determine a potential location, design criteria and funding requirements necessary to establish an NL Observatory within the time-frame of this Plan.

[27] Guidance on lighting criteria: International Dark Sky Reserve - Cranborne Chase National Landscape

	• Work with other UK ‘Dark Sky Places’ and related organisations to improve awareness and understanding across the country of the need to reduce light pollution.

LIVING AND WORKING LANDSCAPES

10. Rural Land Management

10.1. Rural land management encompasses farming, forestry, fisheries and game management. In this deeply rural National Landscape landowners, farmers and managers have been the custodians and sculptors of the landscape for centuries. Cranborne Chase National Landscape has a wealth of natural capital (geology, minerals, soil, air, water, plants, animals, habitats) that provide goods and services, often called ecosystem services, that benefit wider society. Today and tomorrow, landowner activities will continue to shape and mould the landscapes we see around us. They will deliver the food security we need through the regenerative management of soils; they will help with the supply of clean air and water.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to rural land management:

- The agricultural character of the National Landscape is typified by arable cropping (52% in 2021), especially the south-eastern sector and on the West Wiltshire Downs.
- There are many large estates within the National Landscape resulting in consistent agricultural regimes over large areas, over time.
- The Vale of Wardour and the north-western edge of the area are mostly grasslands.
- A typical farm is slightly larger than the regional average and consists of predominantly arable land with some permanent pasture and woodland. It is the mixed nature of the holdings that contributes significantly to the special qualities of the landscape and its biodiversity.
- There are currently 10 farmer clusters within the National Landscape covering over 51,000h or 52% of the area.
- The mosaic of broad-leaved (9.2% of National Landscape area in 2024), mixed and coniferous woodland (3.2% in 2024), shelterbelts, copses, hedgerows (4,800 km) and veteran trees is a distinctive element in the National Landscape. 75% of all woodlands are under active management. Many ancient woods and woodland are still under active coppicing management.
- Land management practices – Intensive, or changing, land management practices can lead to a decline in wildlife and reduced soil and water quality.
- This Protected Area is one of the most intensively managed game landscapes in the country. This reflects the heritage of the area as an historic hunting Chase and the character of the downlands. Historically there were early cereal crops making way for early season partridge shooting. Much of the focus is now on pheasant shooting which contributes to the social and economic development of rural businesses and communities.
- The legacy of previous land management adds to the historic dimension of the landscape.

Ambition

10.2. The management of the rural land of this National Landscape should be regenerative. This will meet the demand for food, fuel and other produce in ways that conserve and enhance the landscape character, deliver increased public benefits from natural capital and lay the foundations for long term nature recovery.

Key Achievements

- Farming in Protected Landscapes – a Defra-funded programme to offer grants to farmers applying for projects on their land that benefit one or more of the four criteria: Nature, Climate, People, Place. In this National Landscape over £2 million has been distributed as grants to farmers and/or landowners from mid-2021 to end March 2025.
- 'Raising Our Game' – Production of the first integrated landscape management advice for game managers in a protected landscape. Research conducted and analysed with game managers by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust. A repeat research project 10 years on may yield informative trends.
- 'A Landscape View of Trees and Woodland' – Guidelines for tree planting for each landscape character type within the National Landscape. This remains valid today.
- A joint consultation response was prepared with Dorset National Landscape on the Forestry Commissions Draft Forest Plan for woodlands of Cranborne Chase and North Dorset 2016-2026.
- Farmer 'clusters'– Three farmer clusters originally had considerable input from the National Landscape as they were initiated; there are now ten clusters in existence. 'Clusters' are groups of neighbouring farmers coming together to develop and agree landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements across their holdings.

Key issues

1. To ensure the sustainable management of the National Landscape's rural land, it is essential that farmers are encouraged to adopt good environmental and agricultural practices. The nation can then achieve the aims of improved soils, more wildlife, and sustainable food production.
2. Land management practices – Intensive, or changing, land management practices can lead to a decline in wildlife and reduced soil and water quality. The 'best and most versatile' land should always be retained for food production, alongside biodiversity enhancements
3. The area once had a thriving dairy industry but the number of dairies has declined. Cattle and sheep numbers however have remained steady over the past decade whilst pig figures show a drastic reduction from 29,000 in 2010 to 15,500 in 2021. The shelters associated with pig rearing can have a detrimental visual impact in our open landscape areas.
4. Many woodlands are either under-managed or do not have a coherent management plan. The wood-fuel market continues to offer an opportunity to bring more small woodlands into positive management.
5. Deriving from the history of the Chase, deer are an iconic feature but management of herding species, such as fallow, is becoming a pressing issue.

6. The National Landscape is one of the most intensively managed game landscapes in the country and the effects of this are not fully appreciated and valued. This sector can create significant social, environmental and economic benefits but, if poorly managed, can have negative impacts.
7. The impact of pests is a major issue for forest managers, landowners and nature conservationists. There is an increase in the number of alien species, pests and pathogens entering the natural environment, with many being recorded almost monthly. In May 2018, the Forestry Commission noted 30 new pests and diseases affecting livestock, and 15 affecting trees in the UK. These can have a devastating effect on the natural environment and livelihoods.
8. The rivers of the National Landscape, particularly in the catchment of the Hampshire Avon, are some of the finest trout streams in the world, valued highly by fishermen. However, climate change and other factors threaten this heritage and the benefits that flow from it. Water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic; or too much water can be abstracted. In addition, diffuse pollution occurs through poor land management practices, reducing water quality.

The Issues Explained

10.3. Farmland covers over 86% of the National Landscape; together with woodland cover this rises to 96%. The 'best and most versatile land' should be used for food production. The landscapes we cherish are the result of the interactions of nature and human activities over centuries. The stewardship of land managers over past generations, and the commitment of many today, is critical to sustaining, and enhancing, these landscapes into the future.

10.4. The current uptake of environmental stewardship schemes within the National Landscape is nonetheless above the national average with 44% of the 'utilisable agricultural area' under Environmental Stewardship Schemes. The 229 agreements in place in the area cover over 45,500 hectares.

10.5. The UK left the European Union in March 2019. From 2022 onwards, a new environmental land management system will be the cornerstone of the UK agricultural policy, achieving improved biodiversity, water, air quality, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and cultural benefits that improve our mental and physical wellbeing and the safeguarding of the historic landscapes. Before Brexit, farming was supported through the European Union Common Agricultural Policy and the main payment was the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). England is creating its own schemes but has introduced a transition period. The 2023 scheme year was the last year of BPS and from 2024, transitional delinked payments are replacing BPS payments. Delinked payments will be made each year from 2024 until 2027, with the value decreasing each year through progressive reductions.

10.6. Apart from the National Landscape administered Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL),the new grants of particular interest in the National Landscape are:

- the Environmental Land Management scheme that helps farming to be productive in a way that benefits the environment; there are also access and engagement options to improve public access to their land, particularly in areas where access over Rights of Way is limited
- the Woodland Grants and Incentives.

10.7. There are three Environmental Land Management schemes.

- The Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme pays farmers and land managers to take up or maintain sustainable farming and land management practices that:

    - protect and benefit the environment
    - support food production
    - improve productivity
- The Countryside Stewardship scheme provides financial incentives for farmers, foresters and land managers to protect and enhance the natural environment by:
    - increasing biodiversity
    - improving habitat
    - expanding woodland areas
    - improving water quality
    - improving air quality
    - improving natural flood management
- The Landscape Recovery scheme (the current round has closed) pays groups of farmers and land managers to do long-term, large-scale projects together. Land must be in England and consist of at least 500 connected hectares. The scheme supports:
    - net zero carbon emissions
    - protected sites
    - wildlife-rich habitat

10.8. The England Woodland Grants and Incentives schemes are:

- The England Woodland Creation Offer that provides funding to create new woodland on areas that are at least 1 hectare
- The Woodland Creation Planning Grant that provides funding to prepare a Woodland Creation Design Plan that complies with the UK Forestry Standard.
- Protecting tree health seeks to test different ways of slowing the spread of pests and diseases affecting trees in England. Grants are available for ash with ash dieback; diseased larch, spruce and sweet chestnut; and oak with oak processionary moth.

10.9. The National Landscape designation provides a platform for integrating the support provided to the sector with wider environmental, social and economic opportunities. In doing so, the areas could be vital test beds in helping develop a more sustainable approach to agriculture in England.

10.10. There is a move to develop nature friendly and regenerative type farming systems. Regenerative farming refers to an approach that seeks to work with natural systems to restore and enhance the biodiversity, soil fertility and ecosystem service provision (such as carbon sequestration and water retention) of farmed land. Regenerative models focus on increasing the resilience of ecological systems and conserving soils, rather than extracting from these systems solely to achieve market returns. Regenerative farming not only focuses on the resilience of natural capital, but social capital too, with the goal of supporting rural communities and wider supply chains. There are many practices that can be adopted by farmers that will bring environmental and commercial benefits, such as:

- sustainable utilisation of soil, minimising erosion;
- effective water catchment management;
- avoidance of direct pollution and measures to reduce diffuse pollution;
- farm waste minimisation and recycling.

National and local policies must support and encourage farmers in making decisions that bring these "win-win" solutions to the challenges of the future.

10.11. The research for 'Raising Our Game' document (2011) highlighted the importance of game shooting as a reason for acquiring, retaining and managing land. It has a significant effect on the local economy through providing significant employment and housing. It attracts large numbers of day and weekend visitors to the area and supports a significant hospitality service outside of the main tourist season.

10.12. Many shoots in the area are of modest size whilst a few shoots are larger concerns with the turnover of a medium-sized company.

10.13. A significant proportion of the River Avon System is within the National Landscape. It holds two Natura 2000 sites; the Hampshire Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Avon Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). The Hampshire Avon is one of four demonstration test catchments in England, a Government funded project designed to study how to control diffuse pollution from agriculture to improve and maintain water quality in rural river catchments areas.

10.14. There has already been much good work undertaken such as the river restoration work of the Wessex Chalk Streams Project. Additionally, the Wessex Rivers Trust continues to be very active in its river restoration work delivering innumerable benefits to water quality and conservation. Much more remains to be achieved however, if our world-class fisheries are to be sustainable in the face of climate change and other challenges.

Outcomes and Policies

RLM A Land managers understand landscape character and are aware of how their activities can impact on the landscape and environment of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

RLM 1 Identify good agricultural practices that that are appropriate to the challenges facing the land managers of the National Landscape:

- Disseminate case studies through networks and information hubs.
- Support the formation of further farm clusters across the area.
- Offer National Landscape focused landscape and land management familiarisation and training, as appropriate.

RLM B Land management in the National Landscape integrates productive commercial activity with the conservation of cultural, natural and social heritage.

RLM2 Rural land management practices in the National Landscape and its setting should be compatible with, and seek to further, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. Land managers should have:

- access to clear and consistent sources of advice, guidance and support (including on regenerative and nature-friendly practices);
- fair access to markets including the promotion of local and seasonal produce and the development of local services and markets; and

- payments for environmental services that benefit the distinctive natural and historic environment of the National Landscape.

The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership will:

- work with partners, such as the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, to disseminate appropriate information and advice on how game management practices can positively contribute to National Landscape purposes, and support research to this end.
- Support and encourage environmental enhancement of the best and most versatile land being maintained in regenerative food production.
- support and encourage landscape sensitive and appropriate woodland management, encouraging skills training, reconnecting supply chains and increasing biodiversity, including PAWS restoration.
- work with, and support partners such as the Wessex Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, private landowners, fishery managers, Wildlife Trusts and Natural England, to deliver programmes and projects that bring environmental benefits to water catchments while securing a viable future for fisheries.

11. Planning and Transport

11.1. Intrinsically built development can impact adversely on flora and fauna. Development within this nationally important landscape should be limited [National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 189] and biodiversity net gain is a requirement for larger projects. Cranborne Chase National Landscape takes the view that all built development should contribute to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the principles of our Position Statement on BNG should be applied to all development.

11.2. The demographics indicate Cranborne Chase National Landscape has an above average preponderance of older people which puts pressure on limited services. Younger families have significant distances to travel for work and education. People are, however, needed to manage the land and sustain the characteristics of the living landscape. Although there are 4 major tourist attractions, the wildlife, scenic, and cultural attractions of the area are not widely known and tourism pressures are concentrated on a few locations.

11.3. National landscapes are attractive places to live but costs are high. Local and Neighbourhood Plans, and development management decisions, should sustain rural character and qualities whilst supporting the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. A balance must be struck between providing the affordable homes, the facilities and services for modern life and the conservation of nationally important landscapes. Cranborne Chase National Landscape does not contain large settlements and the acknowledged need is for affordable dwellings for those whose work sustains the living landscapes.

11.4. With a relatively small population spread over a large area the scope for adaptation and mitigation in the face of climate change is limited. Where there are no conflicts with heritage designations Cranborne Chase National Landscape encourages the utilisation of roofs for the capture and utilisation of renewable energy. However, in an area renowned for its scenic beauty field scale solar

and wind turbines conflict with the national designation and the conservation and enhancement of scenic beauty.

11.5. Land use and development topics are inherently central to 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape'. The planning functions of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership, including transport matters, naturally interlink very closely with landscape and rural economy issues. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for new development along with Local Nature Recovery Strategies to target the best places for nature recovery and wider environmental benefits. Biodiversity Net Gain will mean that developments leave habitats in a better state for wildlife than they were in before, whilst Local Nature Recovery Strategies will better equip local planning authorities to incorporate nature recovery objectives into local plans and development decisions.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to planning and transport:

- Organisationally complex; there are currently five Local Planning Authorities, four Highways Authorities together with National Highways, and Network Rail.
- A largely rural, open, and undeveloped area comprising landscapes sensitive to change.
- Predominantly agricultural land uses but with an unusually high proportion of woodlands and forestry in parts.
- Landscapes of considerable scenic beauty, with extensive views, and hosting important habitats and species.
- The landscapes are rich in history with significant visual and archaeological features.
- Distinctive settlement patterns with historic elements readily visible and central to the character of settlements.
- Architectural styles vary considerably throughout the National Landscape, dependent on availability of building materials.
- The built environment forms an integral part of local character and distinctiveness and adds to the diversity of the area's landscape as a whole.
- Large historic country houses at the centre of historic parklands and gardens and other characteristic buildings.
- Two separate railways converge on Salisbury through this National Landscape but only a single station within the area.
- Limited public transport, and special buses are needed to get students to and from schools.
- A single north/south main road route and four roughly east/west roads, two of them Trunk Roads.
- A minor road network of narrow and frequently twisty routes that reflects the deeply rural, tranquil character of the National Landscape, with few realignments and improvements.
- One of the darkest skies in southern central England, designated as 14th International Dark Sky Reserve in the world, with lighting criteria to allow the stars to be seen by current and future generations.

Ambition

11.6. Planning and transportation strategies, policies, and decisions that affect this nationally important National Landscape always both conserve and enhance its special qualities. Where development is necessary, it is located and designed to integrate fully with the landscape character and natural beauty. Potentially intrusive energy generation and communications development are located outside the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. All management of, and improvements to, roads enhance the distinctive character of the area. There will be a range of more sustainable options for transport that reduce its effects on tranquillity and the natural environment of the area.

Key Achievements

- Planning Protocol – signed by All local planning authorities in 2005 and refined in September 2006 (Appendix XX) continues to ensure the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership is a consultee on Local Plan / Neighbourhood Plan documents as well as Minerals and Waste Plans. All planning applications over a certain size, or any applications that may have an adverse impact on the National Landscape, are sent to the Partnership for comment.
- National Policies – Both independently and in combination with other National Landscapes, the Partnership has contributed to, and influenced, 20 national policy and practice consultations since 2019.
- Guidance Documents – The Partnership has eleven National Landscape Position Statements, and twelve Fact Sheets and Good Practice Notes (See Appendix AA). They provide information on topics of relevance to the landscape and planning within and around the National Landscape. Their purpose is to guide and assist applicants, communities and planning officers at both the policy and development management levels.
- Planning policy and applications – Since 2019, Local Planning Authorities have received relevant National Landscape information in response to 37 policy documents and 1,041 planning applications. This input enabled them to take account of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and its setting.
- Appeals and Inquiries – The Partnership has provided 38 planning appeal responses to the Inspectorate since 2006; given evidence at major appeal Inquiries securing successful outcomes for the National Landscape and its setting; and contributed to future strategies at five Plan Examinations in Public.
- Planning and Transportation Seminars – Despite Covid-19, there have been 6 annual seminars since 2019 with, on average, over thirty delegates at each. In addition, 5 bespoke seminars have been provided. Focusing on a topic relevant to the time, these seminars are highly valued as continuing professional development.
- Mitigation of Major Development – In addition to mitigating the impacts of major developments, the Partnership has achieved agreement to financial compensation for the wear and tear of additional recreational use flowing from large developments close to the National Landscape and the unquantifiable disruptions to the landscapes and tranquillity of the area.
- Section 85 leaflet – Provides guidance on the duty that ‘relevant authorities’ ‘must seek to further the purposes of AONB designation’ for public bodies, organisations, and persons in public office. It is an example of good practice in Natural England’s advice on the topic.

- Landscape Character – The Historic Landscape Character Assessment, the Historic Environment Action Plans and the detailed Landscape Character Assessment for the Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme area supplement the Landscape Character Assessment which was reassessed in 2024. Planning staff have been offered specific training to enable them to incorporate landscape matters into their work and decisions.
- Landscape Sensitivity – This seminal study (2007) of the inherent sensitivity and robustness of the landscapes of the National Landscape continues to guide and inform decision making.
- Tranquillity – The team has taken forward the CPRE data, supplemented by field surveys, to relate the findings more precisely to the landscape character areas of this National Landscape. Our work has been presented as good practice internationally as well as being taken as the basis for further work in two National Parks.
- A Guide to Conserving and Enhancing the Setting of the Rural Road Network of the AONB – Acutely aware that the public most frequently perceive the landscapes around them from roads, this document provides guidance on the landscape management of the highway corridors across the National Landscape.

Key issues

1. Development pressures – There are frequent proposals for renewable energy generation, communications masts, waste treatment, large-scale agricultural storage and general warehousing and distribution. There is an inconsistent approach to replacement dwellings and additional 'essential worker' dwellings across the National Landscape; and a shortage of affordable housing for local people. Proposals for replacement dwellings are leading to a higher proportion of larger, less affordable, dwellings. The annual requirement on Local Planning Authorities to invite the identification of housing sites, along with the current round of Local Plan consultations, can encourage speculative market housing proposals from landowners or developers. Neighbourhood Plan groups feel under pressure to identify development sites, and boundary market towns are required to provide more dwellings.
2. Sustainability – There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework. However, awareness and understanding of the exception in the case of National Landscapes[28] needs to be raised. At a more detailed level, developers are still reluctant to provide appropriate renewable energy generation and adequate storage space for recycling in domestic and commercial, new build and extension situations. Many developments within this National Landscape fall outside the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain criteria and therefore development is not contributing to environmental gains.
3. Diversification – Diversification on a farm can help the local rural economy, particularly if this puts redundant farm buildings to a good use. However, the new use must be right for the National Landscape and its setting. Increasingly, proposals are coming forward that are not apt. This can relate to an increase in traffic and loss of tranquillity as well as changes to form, scale and appearance that affect the special qualities of the area.
4. Understanding Landscape Character - Despite our LPAs having landscape staff, the significance of, and weight to be given to, landscape matters in national landscapes is not always adequately

[28] NPPF 2024 Paragraph 11 b)i

appreciated or implemented; LPA Landscape Institute trained staff are not always asked to comment on applications.

5. Transport – Effective and frequent public transport for an extensive area with a low population is prohibitively expensive. The result is that buses are few and private vehicle ownership is high. There is a shortage of affordable parking at transport nodes to facilitate greater use of public transport. A lack of stations on the two railways through the National Landscape means they are an underutilised resource.
6. Roads – Highway management and maintenance does not always reflect the special characteristics of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Run off from roads can cause serious pollution in rivers. The routing of freight traffic through the area has a negative effect on tranquillity.
7. Lighting nuisance – National data shows the general loss of dark night skies and the risk of light pollution encroaching on the dark skies of the National Landscape[29]. Poorly directed or excessive lighting can cause sky-glow. This reduces the ability to see and enjoy the night-sky. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, makes it possible to deem artificial light emitted from premises to be a statutory nuisance under certain conditions. However, this is only relevant regarding light as a nuisance to a particular household(s). Much stronger, wide ranging lighting policies are required. Some of the Local Planning Authorities include conditions in planning consents regarding lighting issues in line with this National Landscape's policies on lighting, others have yet to put this in motion. (See also Chapter 8 Dark Night Skies).
8. Resources – Our LPAs continue to suffer staff shortages and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership only has a single, part-time Landscape and Planning Officer.
9. Uncertainty - The Government has recently revised the NPPF (Feb 2025) and also aspires to build hundreds of thousands more houses in England. At the same time, Government reviewed its 25-year Environment Plan, and put greater emphasis on conserving and enhancing the natural environment nationwide. Government has only implemented part of the recommendations of its review of English National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Issues Explained

11.7. Five local authorities are responsible for planning policy, transport policy, development management decisions, and enforcement within this National Landscape. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape team supplies specialist professional expertise and informed advice and judgements to the LPAs. Neighbourhood Plans can refine the policy details for a parish or group of parishes. Planning authorities, and their Planning Committees, are under a legal duty to seek to further conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. They also have statutory power to take all such action they need to accomplish this.

11.8. In terms of land-use planning this requires two principal actions. Firstly, there must be consistent and coherent policies in place to achieve the purpose of designation. Secondly, there must be

[29] Román, M.O., Wang, Z., Sun, Q., Kalb, V., Miller, S.D., Molthan, A., Schultz, L., Bell, J., Stokes, E.C., Pandey, B. and Seto, K.C., et al. (2018). NASA's Black Marble nighttime lights product suite. Remote Sensing of Environment 210, 113-143. doi:10.1016/j.rse.2018.03.017.

understanding and timely use of these policies. One role of the National Landscape Partnership is to share good practice.

11.9. Applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Local Planning Authority's Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Appendix x) does not change the legal status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision-making. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development although restrictive policies apply to National Landscapes, Green Belts, SSSIs, and similar designations.

11.10. The reviewed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continues to instruct local planning authorities to make a distinction between Protected Areas and 'other' countryside. In a National Landscape, great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty (Appendix xx). Planning permission should be refused for 'major developments' (Appendix xx), except in exceptional circumstances; and only where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. All relevant local planning policy must distinguish between this National Landscape and non-designated countryside.

11.11. NPPF paragraphs 185 and 186 seek net biodiversity gains in plans and planning decisions in addition to the legal requirement for biodiversity net gain; a similar approach to landscapes should apply in the National Landscape.

11.12. Despite the weight given to National Landscape matters in the NPPF, there is a tendency for LPAs to give particular weight to the views of statutory consultees in both policy formulation and development management decisions. The Government's review of English National Landscapes and National Parks currently provides an opportunity to promote, at the national level, that National Landscape partnerships should be statutory consultees for all planning and transportation matters affecting their area or its setting.

11.13. The need for development proposals both to conserve and enhance natural beauty in the NL is not fully recognised or implemented. Despite the NPPF stating that 'great weight' should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, decision makers have a range of guidance to take into account. When judging the merits of applications, it should be borne in mind that a National Landscape has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The s.85(A1) duty to seek to further the purposes of designation must be considered on an equal footing with other duties. For example, the Highways Act 1980 does not trump s.85, neither does s.85 trump the Highways Act.

11.14. Development proposals need to be in appropriate locations and of an appropriate form, scale, and materials. This will enable them to integrate with landscape character both within and adjacent to the National Landscape. All Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) should, from a National Landscape perspective, include Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) to demonstrate that potential landscape impacts, including both location and integration within the landscape, have been taken into account.

11.15. The sense of place is easily lost. Suburbanisation and the cumulative effect of 'permitted development' can break down local distinctiveness. Replacing small-scale, locally distinct features with ones of a standard design erodes local character.

11.16. There are repeated, and occasionally temporary, changes to the General Development Order (Appendix xx) extending Permitted Development Rights. This can potentially lead to increases in traffic and changes to the appearance of buildings and land, especially when additional agricultural buildings do not follow Cranborne Chase National Landscape guidance or new roof lights add to light pollution.

11.17. The cumulative effect of house extensions and larger replacement dwellings is twofold; it changes the character of the locality and it reduces the supply of smaller, potentially more affordable, dwellings. The latter exacerbates a serious social issue, and the former may impact adversely on the 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty' criteria.

11.18. The one County Council and three Unitary Authorities within the National Landscape produce Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

- Whilst there is generally very little mineral extraction from within this National Landscape, there is a long history of providing locally distinctive building materials. This is mainly from greensand and sandy limestone (Chilmark stone). The need to safeguard local identity and distinctiveness by using local materials is understood. This strengthens the local vernacular. However, there is a need to take account of the potential disruption, visual and other impacts resulting from the extraction of materials to achieve this.
- National Landscapes have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. In October 2016, the Partnership endorsed the principle that such landscapes are not places for the importation of waste for treatment, processing, or disposal.

Mineral and waste HGVs have the capacity to disrupt the tranquillity of the National Landscape as well as causing physical damage to the verges and structures of the roads.

11.19. Developments in the setting of the National Landscape can also have significant impacts on the area. Their consideration must be in relation to the purposes of designation. Construction of high or expansive structures, other development, or any change generating movement, noise, odour, vibration or dust over a wide area will affect the setting. As our appreciation of the relationships between neighbouring landscapes grows, so too does our understanding of what constitutes the setting.

11.20. Planning applications for development proposals within this National Landscape or its setting all too often do not demonstrate an understanding of the importance of supplying all the relevant information. To assist applicants in making their applications the Partnership has endorsed (6 April 2016) a Position Statement on 'Good enough to approve in an AONB'.

Sustainability

11.21. There is continuing pressure to erect wind turbines and telecommunication masts in the National Landscape or its setting. These are very tall or substantial structures. They can detract from scenic beauty within the area and impair significant views to or from it. Similarly, extensive farm scale photo-voltaic arrays reduce the area of productive farmland. These types of developments can introduce a sense of 'industrialisation' into an otherwise scenic, unspoilt, or tranquil landscape. They are frequently visually intrusive and fail to harmonise with the scale and character of the area. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership has produced a Position Statement on Renewable Energy, and one on Field Scale PVs.

11.22. Recycling storage space, composting areas, and roof-based PV installations should be integral to the design of all new build, extension, and conversion projects.

11.23. The government has provided exemptions from 'net environmental gain' in relation to the small-scale development most common in this National Landscape. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership is of the view that all development should provide environmental gains and has produced a Position Statement to that effect. However, embedding the idea that development should help achieve the 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty' criteria into the planning processes is still some way off.

11.24. Being within this National Landscape appears, from house price surveys, to add a significant premium to property prices. It therefore seems appropriate that such properties, when constructed or extended, should contribute to the management of the high-quality landscapes that are enhancing their values. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (Appendix xx) is a mechanism that could allow a contribution towards National Landscape management; however, this has not happened. Compensation should be paid to the National Landscape for its on-going management whenever development takes place. Furthermore, planning authorities must seek to further conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape. In addition, they have the power to take all such action they need to accomplish this. There needs to be a consistent but effective approach across the National Landscape that delivers a high-quality landscape at a fair cost to all who benefit.

11.25. One way would be for the Local Planning Authorities to show how their use of CIL meets their duty to conserve and enhance the National Landscape. The chapter on Sustainable Communities considers the setting of a separate Developer Contributions scheme to direct a proportion of the enhanced value to conserving and sustaining the character, qualities, and landscapes of the National Landscape.

Farm Diversification

11.26. Some farm diversification proposals risk industrialisation of the countryside and a loss of tranquillity. There is potential for National Landscape locations to be viewed as cheap options for activities that should be in a business park close to where potential employees live and outside the National Landscape e.g. storage and distribution, waste processing or treatment.

11.27. The Partnership supports the diversification and re-use of redundant rural buildings for economic activities where it sustains the local economy and benefits the communities of the National Landscape. It must, of course, conserve and enhance natural beauty and not damage the rural roads or tranquillity. A challenging example is composting and anaerobic digestion. Local schemes that minimise transportation can fit with the National Landscape purposes. To do so they must comply with the three elements of 'from the farm, on the farm, for the farm'. Such schemes are not apt if the materials are not local; if processing is not at source; and if the product is not used on site. The Partnership has endorsed a Position Statement on Farm Diversification.

Roads and Transport

11.28. Most people see and appreciate the landscape from roads. The highway corridor often echoes the adjacent landscapes. Both factors are particularly important in National Landscapes. Therefore, the highway environment warrants special attention to reflect and sustain the special qualities and characteristics of the area. The effects of transport in the National Landscape are managed through

the policies and programmes in the Local Transport Plans of the highway authorities, and the programmes of National Highways.

11.29. These plans aim to:

- improve access to key services;
- integrate transport provision and infrastructure improvements; and
- promote sustainable forms of transport.

11.30. This National Landscape has four A-roads running east to west (A354, A30, A303, A36) and one (A350) running north to south on its western edge. The A303 and A36 are trunk roads managed by National Highways. On B and C roads, 'rat runs' develop avoiding the busy A roads. Heavy vehicles, their vibrations, and traffic flows on these more rural roads, especially through daily commuting, can cause congestion, pollution and loss of character and tranquillity; and damage to verges, the roads themselves, and buildings.

11.31. Road design that does not consider the special qualities of the landscape can harm the character of the National Landscape. Road safety will always be a prime concern but that does not preclude sensitive design of schemes and street furniture, or over-ride the duty to seek to further conserving and enhancing natural beauty. Traffic management schemes, usually involving reduced speed limits and physical structures, have the potential to urbanise rural situations and have not reduced the daily 'rat runs' caused by those avoiding A-road congestion. The safety of vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders remains an issue in this National Landscape.

11.32. There is little incentive to use public transport. There are infrequent bus services and just one rail station in the National Landscape, with parking limited and costly. The use of public transport would increase if there were better and affordable parking facilities near-by. Village 'hubs' could be created to provide parking, easy access to public transport and village facilities. This merits further research.

Lighting Nuisance

11.33. To retain International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) status, there must be a comprehensive Lighting Management Plan in place within the reserve. This sets criteria to limit the upwards and sideways emission from external lighting for private and public landowners within that area. An absence of detailed lighting policies within current Local/ Development Plans is a hindrance to implementing good lighting practice when determining planning applications, although some Neighbourhood Plans do now include dark sky policies. The Local/Development Plans for the five Local Authorities cover different time-periods. This means some may be willing to consider adding specific lighting policies relatively quickly whilst others suggest they are not able to do so for some time. (See also chapter 8 Dark Night Skies).

Outcomes and Policies

PT A Strategic and local decisions are formulated taking full account of the purposes of designation and are implemented in a comprehensive, coherent and consistent way with regard to the character and quality of the area and its setting, together with views into and out of the National Landscape, such that these decisions result in no net detriment to the special qualities of the area.

	PT1 All development and transport policies and proposals in the National Landscape and its setting must seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. Justification for policies and proposals within the area should either have regard to, or be based on convincing evidence of, local need arising from within the national landscape. In doing so, they should be compatible with the National Landscape Management Plan and guidance produced by the National Landscape Partnership, including the: i. Landscape Character Assessments; ii. Landscape Sensitivity Study; iii. Historic Landscape Characterisation; iv. Guide to Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape Setting of our Rural Highways; v. Nature Recovery Plan; vi. International Dark Sky Reserve designation criteria; vii. Climate Change Adaptation Plan (when published); and viii. Its Position Statements and Good Practice Guides / Notes.
	PT2 The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities should be identified as strategic priorities in Local Plans (including Minerals and Waste local Plans), Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan as a material consideration and recognise National Landscape guidance documents and position statements as appropriate.
	PT3 The cumulative impacts of development and transport proposals on the natural beauty of the National Landscape should be fully assessed and addressed in accordance with the National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessments, Sensitivity Study and any relevant position statement or guidance published by the Partnership.
	PT4 A landscape-led approach should be applied to development and transport proposals in the National Landscape and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals: a. address the natural beauty of the National Landscape as primary consideration at all stages of the development process (including design), from initial conception through to implementation; b. address all the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area; c. protect and/or enhance key views to and from the National Landscape; d. address access to natural beauty, including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure; e. reflect and enhance the character of the local area;

	f. avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects cannot be avoided, minimise them; g. seek opportunities to enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape; and h. deliver substantially more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the National Landscape. This landscape-led approach is particularly important for major development.[30]
	PT5 Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape should be compatible with, and seek to further, the conservation and enhancement of this local distinctiveness. This should include: • being informed by the National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessments and any relevant position statement or guidance published by the Partnership. • being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local and historic settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials and in accordance with design guidance adopted by local planning authorities and as part of Neighbourhood Development Plans. • being compatible with the conservation and enhancement of dark night skies, by seeking to avoid and, where avoiding is not possible, minimise lighting. The reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings should be supported where this helps retain the distinctive character of the National Landscape. There should be a presumption against the loss of distinctive qualities and features.
	PT6 Planning Authorities will ensure that development associated with existing permanent buildings in the National Landscape and its setting are only supported where all the following criteria are met: i. replacement buildings are not materially larger than the ones they replace; ii. replacement buildings are in the same use as the ones they replace; iii. proposed buildings do not materially impact on the special qualities of the National Landscape, especially through height or bulk, the size and scale of any proposed extension is not disproportionate to the existing building; iv. the proposed development will incorporate all additional ancillary development including storage, parking and hard surfacing. v. any proposed permanent dwelling does not replace a temporary structure or one where the residential use has been abandoned. vi. the size and scale of any garage or outbuilding within the curtilage of a dwelling is proportionate to the dwelling.
	PT7 Development proposals should aim to provide a net gain in biodiversity of at least 20% particularly regarding the priority habitats listed in the Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan* *viability justification set out in Appendix 8 of this National Landscape Management Plan

[30] 'Major development', in this context, equates to the definition provided in Footnote 67 of the NPPF 2024

PT8 Local communities should be inspired to engage with the good planning of this National Landscape by being encouraged and assisted to:

- prepare and adopt Neighbourhood Plans and other similar initiatives, such as Village Design Statements, that respect the special landscapes and dark night skies of the National Landscape and the objectives of this Management Plan.
- identify local needs / environmental projects that help offset impacts of development, conserve and enhance local character and distinctiveness, and utilise the Neighbourhood proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy.

PT B Policies and schemes aimed at meeting local needs enhance the special qualities and characteristics of the National Landscape, including its built heritage.

PT9 Support the provision of a variety of housing that is appropriate to the character of the area and meets evidenced local community needs. The priority is to meet affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity, such as social rented housing. In doing so, development policies and development proposals should be compatible with the National Landscape Partnership's Position Statement 10 – Housing within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

When considering proposals for housing development in the National Landscape, LPA partners will give emphasis to affordable housing, and will treat the National Landscape as a rural area (NPPF Dec 2024 Para 65) where the government's restriction on the requirement to provide affordable housing does not apply.

PT10 Consideration should be given to supporting local employment opportunities that conserve and enhance the National Landscape, maintain and enhance local community amenities and services, ensuring improved access to these amenities and services.

PT11 Provide a quality public realm with good access and accessibility by:

- developing and promoting an integrated system, whereby roads, railways, public transport and Rights of Way networks are more accessible and interconnect, minimising the impact of traffic on the National Landscape and encouraging a safer and more attractive environment for walking, cycling and horse riding, to include parking provision for trailers/horse-boxes.
- minimising freight transport through the National Landscape to help protect tranquillity, the rural nature of settlements, and the special qualities of the area.
- providing affordable parking facilities at public transport nodes, car sharing and community transport initiatives to enable and encourage a reduced reliance on private cars.

12. Sustaining Rural Communities

12.1. The low population density, absence of large settlements within the National Landscape and daily commuting outside the boundary mainly for work, all potentially threaten the economic viability of remaining local services such as post offices, pubs, doctors' surgeries, village shops and village halls. Alongside the key land-based industries of farming, forestry, game management and related businesses, the rural economy of the National Landscape comprises a range of small to medium sized businesses. The high-quality environment offers immense opportunities for the further development of low impact, regenerative rural tourism.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to sustaining rural communities:

- Sparsely populated National Landscape with an absence of large-scale settlements, reinforcing a deeply rural 'sense of place' amongst communities.
- Community spirit is strong in many settlements, as demonstrated through participation in 'Village of the Year' competitions, restoration of lost parish features and organisation of annual fetes, festivals or traditional events.
- Many National Landscape Parishes have taken the opportunity to express their aspirations by producing Neighbourhood Plans.
- Community enterprise thrives through a range of initiatives, including the development of several Community Land Trusts and at least nine community owned and run village stores, each providing other services in addition to retail.
- Generally, however, most employment opportunities are either outside the National Landscape in the boundary towns or further still afield, with a concentration of employment through a few large employers.
- The diverse landscapes, wildlife, historic and cultural features are very attractive to visitors, along with several notable visitor attractions and the Rights of Way/Open Access network.
- Artists, authors and musicians are also known to be attracted to this stunning landscape to work.
- The seasonal game sector supports several high-end hospitality businesses, primarily 'boutique' style public houses and accommodation providers.
- With a high proportion of the National Landscape under agriculture or forestry, there are several locally based allied services such as vehicle repair/servicing businesses, currently two livestock markets on the periphery, various timber yards, feed millers/merchants and local craft / food producers.

Ambition:

12.2. A thriving rural economy, with key services accessible to all, ensures economic and social wellbeing and helps sustain the landscape. Local communities appreciate and care for the National Landscape; residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Key Achievements

- Community shops – East Knoyle, Hindon, Maiden Bradley, Semley, Coombe Bissett, Wylye, Dinton, Witchampton and Broadchalke have community shops, primarily run by volunteers. Five were supported with AONB Sustainable Development Fund grants and several won LEADER support. The award winning Chalke Valley Stores in Broadchalke has a multi-functional 'hub' comprising a community shop, post office, café, archive area and office space through the multi-use of the United Reform Chapel.
- Several communities (of either place or interest) have received grants from the Chase & Chalke LP Scheme through the 'Communities Caring for Heritage' project, to carry out local improvements to their natural or historic heritage.
- All the parishes within the Chase & Chalke LP area have participated in the 'Champions of the Past' project, receiving training in the understanding and interpretation of LiDAR data followed by ground truthing or investigating previously unknown archaeological features in their local landscape

Key Issues

1. Regenerative tourism can provide an income for local people and support the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the landscape. Increased income from tourism may be hampered by a lack of variety of visitor accommodation available.
2. There remains a lack of consistent and focussed marketing promoting the wealth of local products and services on offer within the National Landscape.
3. There are a considerable number of local businesses that rely on the land-based sector (farming and forestry) together with those built around the seasonal game industry.
4. In this National Landscape, high speed broadband has increased although many still cannot access an acceptable level of broadband service. Without careful design, location, and planning, and the consideration of wider technologies, the infrastructure to deliver improved services (e.g., mobile masts) can degrade natural beauty.
5. Housing needs – Local people have a range of housing needs. Property values in the National Landscape are generally, and noticeably, higher than just outside it and there is a lack of affordable housing within this designated area.
6. Local facilities and services - Many communities value and prefer to use local facilities that they can access easily, without the need to use a car. It can be difficult to supply facilities and services cost effectively to a dispersed and sparse population. It is a major challenge to secure a full range of services for all to access.
7. Influencing the planning system - Local people want to influence the future of their Parish and the outcomes of the planning system. Individual development proposals can create divisions. Neighbourhood plans, village plans and village design statements are all ways for local people to get together and set out a vision for their area. Communities do need support in putting these plans together.

The Issues Explained

12.3. Regenerative tourism – During 2023, the 'Enhancing the Visitor Economy of the National Landscape' was reviewed ten years on from the original research, offering new insights into how best to promote the area to potential visitors through the development of regenerative tourism. A definition of regenerative tourism is: *An approach to tourism that aims to restore, replenish, and enhance the natural, cultural, and social environments of a destination. It goes beyond minimizing negative impacts and focuses on actively creating positive contributions to local ecosystems, communities, and economies.*[31]

12.4. The National Landscape intends to work closely with and through local communities to initiate the concept of regenerative tourism that essentially aims for visitors to have a positive impact on their holiday destination, meaning that they leave it in a better condition than how they found it. It goes beyond "not damaging" the environment, aiming to actively revitalise and regenerate it, thus having a positive impact on local communities and economies. There is a very strong business case to have the National Landscape at the heart of regenerative tourism. Many businesses depend on the high quality, natural environment that the landscape provides, but they can also help maintain and enhance those environments.

12.5. Attracted by the qualities of this landscape, creative businesses such as arts and crafts enterprises, also flourish. There are many low impact tourism opportunities in the area including walking, cycling and horse riding, visiting historic sites or enjoying the range of local events. The International Dark-Sky Reserve status offers a huge boost to the 'astro-tourism' sector with stargazing events and an annual StarFest attracting ever increasing numbers of visitors, many from outside the area.

12.6. Past campaigns such as 'Taste the Chase' increased consumers' understanding of the countryside; how food is produced; and where food comes from. Several thriving community shops stock and promote mainly local produce and promoting local produce should be an area of work the National Landscape focusses on through the regenerative tourism initiative.

12.7. Land based employment within this National Landscape is mainly focused within the productive aspects of farming and forestry, the seasonal game sector and the allied service/product businesses. Other employment comprises those businesses that provide a range of services to local communities and some largely tourism focused attractions that gain their income mainly from visitors from outside the area.

12.8. Good communications are essential if the local economy is to grow. Superfast broadband allows easier and more efficient ways to do business and makes it possible to work from home. Good communications can also help reduce rural isolation and digital exclusion. People can be in touch with family and friends. They can find new ways of receiving public services. The challenge is to encourage provision without the use of intrusive masts, or other infrastructure in the landscape that would have a detrimental effect on the scenic beauty of this National Landscape.

12.9. There is a lack of affordable housing for youngsters or those wishing to come into the National Landscape for work. People with higher-than-average incomes are attracted by the beauty of the landscape as a desirable place to live. This has led to a consequential rise in house prices; there is a

[31] https://www.sustainablejungle.com/regenerative-travel/

premium by being in a protected landscape. A percentage of that gain should be utilised to help manage the landscapes of the area.

12.10. In 2023, the median house price for residential properties in the National Landscape was £283,800 (£248,400 for all rural England); local houses are 14% more expensive. In 2021, the average annual earnings in this National Landscape were £25,800. This compares to an average of £27,600 for all rural England. Dividing house prices by annual earnings creates a housing affordability ratio. In 2023, the National Landscape house-price affordability ratio was 11 (the average for all rural England was 9). This means that full-time employees could expect to spend 11 times their earnings on purchasing a home in the National Landscape. Full-time employees in rural England could expect to spend around 9 times their annual earnings buying a home, making the National Landscape a less affordable area.[32]

12.11. Affordability is an acute issue for newly forming households and many young people move away to find more affordable properties in the bordering market towns or further afield. This can lead to an imbalance in the age and social structure in rural communities, with less support for services such as schools, shops and a loss of social networks. There have also been changes in consumer behaviour (e.g. online shopping) and cuts to public funding (e.g. public transport routes). Both can lead to the closure of local facilities and services with fewer people using services and facilities.

12.12. The loss of a rural Post Office can also work against small local businesses that use postal/ delivery services to receive materials and to distribute services and products. However, some of the community-run village shops have taken some of the stand-alone Post Offices in-house.

12.13. Many people want to exercise their right to get involved in development decisions that affect them. People can have more input to the development of their local area through the creation of Neighbourhood Plans or Neighbourhood Development Orders. Support and encouragement continue to be needed to enable communities engaging with the planning process and their local planning authority, to ensure that they meet statutory requirements and take account of all aspects of what makes rural communities viable. This National Landscape has offered advice and helped input to 11 Neighbourhood Plans to date.

Outcomes and Policies

SRC A Local communities benefit from a thriving rural economy, based on the natural, historic and cultural resources of the National Landscape, that also conserves and enhances its landscape character and special qualities.	
	SRC1 Work collaboratively with landowners, farmers and allied businesses to improve the land-based sectors' resilience and profitability whilst helping to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape.
	SRC2 Seek new, inventive and sensitive solutions to the retention of local shops and provision of viable local services, for example, through the integration of local service delivery and through the delivery of universal high-speed broadband.

[32] House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales: year ending March 2023 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housepricestatisticsforsmallareas/yearendingmarch2023

SRC3 The development of suitably located and appropriate recreation and tourism facilities, including a range of quality accommodation, including B&B specifically for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, will be supported that enables a thriving visitor economy whilst promoting and enhancing the special qualities of the National Landscape.

SRC B By the end of this plan period, the National Landscape will become a high quality Regenerative Rural Tourism destination where visitors have a positive impact on their destination, leaving it in a better condition than how they found it.

SRC4 Stimulate and support regenerative tourism practices* in the National Landscape that sustain its natural beauty, support nature recovery and enhance the well-being of local communities. This will include:

i. Ensuring that the tourism sector recognises the benefits of conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the National Landscape and minimising the emission of greenhouse gases, reflecting this in policy and practice.

ii. Visitors, residents, local businesses and communities should be provided with opportunities to contribute directly to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape and improve access to the area through local individual, community, and employee volunteering opportunities; and visitor-gifting schemes.

iii. Developing collaborative and joined-up working between public, private and voluntary sector tourism organisations across the National Landscape, enabling greater overall efficiency and use of resources.

iv. Visitors (particularly walkers, cyclists and horse-riders[33]) should be provided with a variety of accommodation options over a range of prices. The siting and design of visitor accommodation should be compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, including its special qualities.

v. Directing tourism businesses to information and skills training to promote better the special qualities of the National Landscape to visitors.

vi. Exploring the potential for a public art trail for 2027 to encourage increased footfall to businesses within and around the National Landscape whilst raising the profile of the area.

* *visitors have a positive impact on their destination, leaving it in a better condition than how they found it*

SRC C Proactive and cohesive communities enjoy a high quality of life.

SRC5 Developers and Local Authorities must commit to increasing the provision of affordable housing in and around the National Landscape where that is consistent with the primary purposes of its designation.

SRC6 By the end of 2026, initiate discussion to formulate a developer contribution scheme to secure monies from the enhanced property values to support the management of this National Landscape's character, qualities, and landscapes which bring about those heightened values.

[33] Changing Lives through Horses https://www.bhs.org.uk/support-us/our-campaigns/changing-lives-through-horses/

	SRC7 Support community initiatives that promote sustainable lifestyles, such as those embracing community shops or combined/mobile community facilities, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, community woodlands, recycling and community transport, that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape to encourage and maintain the viability and diversity of rural community life.
	SRC8 Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Neighbourhood Plans) that conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of rural community life.

SPECIAL LANDSCAPES TO ENJOY

13. Awareness and Understanding

13.1. The National Landscape comprises living, working landscapes shaped and managed by people. The natural beauty, historic and cultural heritage has long provided inspiration for artists, crafts people, writers and musicians; many of whom have made the area their home. To ensure that all recognise, enjoy and value the landscapes, it is vital to improve awareness and understanding of the National Landscape.

Features that make this National Landscape special regarding awareness and understanding:

- This National Landscape is an inspirational area; a 'hidden gem' with a wealth of visual, natural, historical and cultural characteristics.
- Cultural footprints through the ages are visible throughout the landscape.
- The diverse and distinctive elements that comprise the National Landscape are a valuable, mainly untapped, educational resource.
- Many local people and visitors value the special qualities of the area, including its tranquillity and dark night skies.
- There are nearly two thirds of a million people within thirty minutes' drive of the National Landscape in surrounding market towns, and the Bournemouth and Poole conurbations.
- The National Landscape boasts a wealth of myths, mystery and legends.

Ambitions

13.2. Everyone understands and values the area's special qualities and landscape character. This will include its historic and natural assets, its traditions, mystery and mythical qualities. They will understand what the National Landscape designation means and why the area was designated. They will want to visit and encourage others to do so. We want everyone to promote and support Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Key Achievements

- Branding – In November 2023, the new name of 'National Landscape' was launched. This came in tandem with a national rebranding exercise where a 'family' of logos for all 34 National Landscapes in England was created, led by the National Landscapes Association. Cranborne Chase formally adopted a new logo in March 2024, which was supported by associated brand guidelines, creating a cohesive brand identity for National Landscapes nationally. The rebrand has been rolled out across communications outputs including website and social media with a gradual approach to printed material.
- The Cranborne Chase National Landscape website – The website aims to promote the designation, geographical area and landscape character of the National Landscape, coupled with the activities

and work of the team, plus news of events, ways to explore the area, funding and projects. It acts as the primary point of public information for the National Landscape. The website is continually evolving, with work underway to incorporate elements of the National Landscape's historic 'family' of websites.

- Leaflets – Cranborne Chase National Landscape has a package of leaflets promoting the area, its highlights and top stargazing locations in the IDSR, designed for and to be made available in tourist information centres, especially those in the border market towns of Blandford, Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Warminster and Wimborne. In addition, there is a suite of information and guidance notes on development topics, including landscapes, neighbourhood planning and guidance on responsible lighting. Furthermore, many walk leaflets produced for the Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership form a legacy of the project; there are now approximately 60 new walks leaflets available across the whole National Landscape.
- National Landscape Forums – The Partnership holds a forum annually, with presentations and workshops focusing on aspects of the National Landscape's work and priorities. Approximately 80 attendees come from different interest groups, both from within and outside the area. In addition, the National Landscape hosts an annual Planning Forum, attracting around 35 attendees, engaging them with planning policy that may affect the landscape.
- The Hart – The National Landscape publishes 'The Hart Magazine' annually, distributing it to almost 23,000 homes and businesses across the area, and it is a highly successful way of communicating with communities. It covers the work of the Partnership, promotes the National Landscape area, celebrates projects in the landscape and shares events.
- Online Newsletter – A monthly online newsletter is distributed to over 3,000 subscribers, presenting an array of stories including the Partnership's work, events and news from closely related organisations. Subscribers are largely an active community of supporters of the National Landscape's work and is an effective way of regularly communicating with them.
- Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme – This National Lottery Heritage funded project generated a significant community interest, sharing key communications outputs with the National Landscape including social media platforms, the website and online newsletters. Following the end of the project in June 2025, a legacy has been outlined in a Communications Strategy to continue to engage audiences created throughout the project.
- Social media – The National Landscape manages social platforms aimed at different audiences including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. A plan to improve followers and engagement with these platforms is outlined in the Communications Strategy.
- Press Coverage – The National Landscape submits regular news releases locally, including regular items to the New Blackmore Vale Magazine. It received significant coverage locally and nationally following the launch of the new branding of National Landscapes in November 2023. An approach to improving national coverage is outlined in the Communications Strategy.
- Chalke History Festival – The National Landscape has an annual presence at the Chalke History Festival, a week-long event which enables engagement with approximately 7,000 visitors, increasing awareness of the National Landscape, its role, the Partnership and its activities.

- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) - The National Landscapes Association's rebrand programme placed its central mission as to 'Protect and regenerate our landscapes and make sure everyone can enjoy them', encouraging more people to build a connection with the landscape. The rebrand and messaging was developed following consultation with underrepresented groups and following its launch the team has been involved in the Defra supported Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) training from the Protected Landscapes Partnership (comprising of National Landscapes Association, Natural England, National Parks England and National Trails UK) called 'Inclusive Landscapes for Everyone'.
- Boundary Signs - It has been a long-held ambition of the National Landscape to erect 'Cranborne Chase National Landscape; An International Dark Sky Reserve' signs on trunk, 'A' and 'B' class roads. In 2024, using Defra funding to support the rebrand project, several signs on 'A' & 'B' roads in Wiltshire and Dorset are under development. The aim is that this is the beginning of a more widespread National Landscape awareness signage roll-out, including an approach to parishes in the area re potential signage at entrances to villages.
- Numerous presentations are requested by Parish Councils, natural and historic interest groups, University of the 3rd Age.

Key Issues

1. Embedding the national significance and name change from 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' to 'National Landscape' into the mindset of the public, partners and the media.
2. A lack of awareness among some of the population of the National Landscape of the designation purpose and boundaries. Residents, businesses and landowners are at times unaware of the benefits gained from the designation, such as the high-quality environment, recreation, and health and wellbeing opportunities, or the role they can play in caring for the area.
3. Significance of the National Landscape and its designation to partners and other organisations.
4. The National Landscape lies across the borders of four counties; Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. This generates an 'edge effect'. Other partners and organisations do not always have a full understanding of the designation; or of the work undertaken by the Partnership.
5. Engaging young people – up until the Chase & Chalke LP Scheme, it was difficult to engage with young people. They will be the future custodians of the National Landscape, hence their awareness and involvement in it is vital.
6. It is challenging to engage underrepresented groups and encourage them to the landscape. In part, opportunities are restricted due to the lack of infrastructure (no visitor centre, lack of parking, toilet facilities etc.)
7. The lack of, and complex nature of, public transport links in the National Landscape creates a challenge when promoting this as means of reaching the area.

The Issues Explained

13.3. Despite Cranborne Chase National Landscape being designated in 1981, and having a small team in place since 2000, the National Landscape Partnership continues to find that there is a limited understanding of:

- where the National Landscape boundaries are;

- why the area was designated;
- what the National Landscape's legal designation means; and
- the benefits that it brings.

13.4. On learning more about the National Landscape's existence and extent, a very frequent and familiar comment is one of surprise as to its size. The National Landscape has historically had no signage on any roads leading into the area. Work has begun to install a small number of signs, however a desk study determined that to sign each Trunk, 'A' and 'B' class road together with some minor, yet frequently used roads, between 36 and 41 signs would be required due to the frequency that these roads cross its boundary. The exact locations require some further discussion with the four Highways Authorities.

13.5. The many dispersed small villages and hamlets of the area might also be offered a National Landscape sign or logo to add to their village entrance signs to help raise the National Landscape profile, while the concept of adding the logo to Rights of Way way-markers has already begun.

13.6. Awareness of the National Landscape will also improve with regular, consistent and engaging promotion, using a strong brand image and easily accessible information whether via hard copy, web sites or comprehensive use of all social media channels.

13.7. Knowledge of the area's special qualities, landscape character, its traditions and historic and natural assets is not as widespread as the Partnership would like, especially outside of the recent Chase & Chalke LP Scheme. Innovative digital or site-based interpretation would increase understanding and appreciation of the National Landscape's special qualities. Regular engagement with residents and visitors of all ages (through annual programmes of walks, events and activities, competitions and/or a 'Pride of the National Landscape' award scheme) would also positively increase involvement and pride in, and enjoyment of, the area as well as raising its profile.

13.8. The National Landscape team consults with, and works alongside partners, parishes, farmers and interest groups as part of its ongoing work programme and through Management Plan reviews. However, this wide-ranging and extensive promotion and outreach work requires additional resources to be secured, if the critical link between the Partnership and the communities of the National Landscape is to be improved. The Chase & Chalke LP Scheme has significantly raised awareness and understanding of this National Landscape; its legacy will be to extend that awareness across the whole National Landscape.

13.9. It is well understood and accepted that Local Authority and other National Landscape partners have changing and/or increasing demands placed on them; they also inevitably have personnel changes. The National Landscape Partnership is aware of the need to consistently re-iterate or re-enforce information regarding its designation purpose and the duties of others towards it[34]. On its behalf, the National Landscape team should consider if further information needs to be drawn together that would be specifically helpful to different departments or partners and how that information might be most effectively disseminated, e.g. a regular planners' bulletin, parish training workshops or 'surgeries' for communities.

13.10. Aimed at businesses and parishes, the 'Sense of Place' promotional toolkit shows all the special places, views, activities and wildlife of the National Landscape. Local people chose all. Anyone is free

[34] CRoW Act 2000 S 85

to copy the text and pictures to use in their own marketing material. This sends out consistent messages about the area in which the businesses are based, offering businesses and community groups the chance to promote their business or parish events, and the National Landscape, in parallel and with one voice. This resource needs to be regularly reviewed and updated.

13.11. Social media is a key communications tool for the National Landscape to raise its profile and promote its activities, news and encouraging feedback. However, changes in algorithms on Facebook has led to an increased need for commercial 'paid for' promotions to successfully reach its audience, whereas the formerly active audiences of Twitter are now in decline. To successfully engage with a younger audience, video content on Instagram and the use of TikTok should be investigated further. However, due to limited staffing, the creation of a high volume of engaging content for these platforms is a challenge. Specific support on social media content creation is an area to be explored further.

13.12. The Chase & Chalke LP Scheme was designed to attract, engage and involve all ages, backgrounds and abilities in discovering, learning about and enhancing the heritage of the scheme area, which covers just over a quarter of the National Landscape. Many opportunities were devised specifically to attract and engage youngsters. Exciting, creative projects with innovative digital interpretation have been developed to bring the National Landscape 'to life'. This scheme, currently extended to June 2025, still has the potential to significantly increase both the profile of the area, and appreciation of everything the National Landscape has to offer all residents and visitors. The National Landscape intends to grasp any opportunity to expand these projects across the whole area as its legacy.

Outcomes and Policies

AU A The purposes of National Landscape designation are known and understood by all partners, stakeholders and other organisations whose programmes of work may affect the natural beauty of the area.

AU1 All partners, stakeholders and other organisations operating in and around this National Landscape will be working actively to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area by:

- developing relevant professional development information and learning opportunities (training, seminars) to increase their understanding of the purpose of designation.
- developing a co-ordinated approach to information, interpretation and marketing activity to promote the special qualities of the area and appropriate behaviour within it.
- promoting the designation, its meaning and special qualities of the area to their internal and external audiences

13.13. progressing the distinctive National Landscape signage at boundaries of the area, and within it.

AU B By the end of the Plan period, the purposes of National Landscape designation are known and understood by all partners and stakeholders; and the landscapes, natural beauty and high-quality environment are better understood, valued and supported by the widest range of stakeholders, local communities and visitors.

AU2 Visitors, residents and local communities should be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Landscape:

- Secure a team of knowledgeable rangers to help plan, manage and deliver an array of outreach activities and practical conservation work throughout the National landscape.
- Provide easily accessible online, downloadable and onsite resources to help promote access to the National Landscape and understanding and appreciation of its special qualities.
- Promote awareness, understanding and engagement with the area to young people, continuing the legacy of the Chase & Chalke LP Scheme
- Develop strategies to reach people or communities with protected characteristics such as people without English as a first language (including the Deaf community), people with disabilities, diversity of ethnicity and those with cognitive/learning and other hidden disabilities.
- Promote the Countryside Code to educate visitors and communities to act appropriately in the countryside and to improve understanding between visitors and those living and working in the area.
- Promote products and services that support the special qualities of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.
- Provide arts and cultural experiences to encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape and support the engagement of new and existing audiences.

14. Wellbeing, Involvement and Learning

14.1. Experiencing a deeply rural and tranquil area refreshes the mind, body, and soul. Community activities and volunteering are means of becoming more personally involved in the local area whilst developing a range of practical and personal skills to help conserve and enhance it. Using the National Landscape as an educational resource for schools and colleges will continue to help youngsters gain a better insight into environmental issues and experience the countryside around them. The vast network of Rights of Way offers opportunities for all to enhance their health and wellbeing in the 'great outdoors'.

Features that make this National Landscape special with regards to wellbeing, involvement, learning:

- A peaceful, tranquil, deeply rural area, with far reaching panoramic views uncluttered by industrial intrusions, a strong sense of remoteness and expanses of dark, star filled night skies supports the wellbeing of local communities and visitors.
- The National Landscape is close to nearly two thirds of a million people; they can reach its borders in just 30 minutes.
- The Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme ran from 2020-2025, offering community engagement, training and a multitude of events and activities within 20 different projects focussed on the natural, historic and cultural heritage of this National Landscape. Many signed up as volunteers through the Chase & Chalke scheme, providing a solid foundation to expand the legacy of the scheme to ensure that community effort extends across the whole National Landscape into the future
- The National Landscape has an extensive web of countryside access (Rights of Way, open access, permissive and named routes); the combined length of which would take you from Southampton to Edinburgh and back again.

Ambition

14.2. Peoples' physical and mental health and wellbeing is improved through connecting and experiencing the high-quality environment, landscape character, places and heritage of this National Landscape for physical activity, learning, relaxation, and inspiration.

14.3. The community involvement, engagement and volunteering legacy of Chase & Chalke continues to grow and strengthen across the whole National Landscape and beyond.

Achievements to date:

- From 2020-25, the Chase & Chalke LP Scheme has delivered a variety of 20 different projects focussing on the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the Chase & Chalke area (approximately one third of the National Landscape). Each project targeted specific improvements of the heritage itself whilst equally needing to engage with and involve a wide range of communities, interest groups, schools, the public including under-represented and hard to reach groups together with the diverse array of people who do not usually engage with the National Landscape nor indeed even know that it exists. These projects were:

Natural Heritage:

- Nurturing Nature – species ID and survey training; undertaking practical conservation tasks
- Greater Grazing – biodiversity improvements to Martin Down NNR
- Crystal Clear Ebble – protecting and restoring the River Ebble
- Wonderful Woodlands - bringing woodlands back into active management
- Starry, Starry Nights - celebrating the international Dark Sky Reserve

Historic Heritage

- Champions of the Past – exploring the remarkable archaeology of the Chase & Chalke area
- Bringing the Landscape to Life – an AR Time Traveller App
- Heritage Schools – Equipping teachers to understand and teach the local heritage

Cultural Heritage

- Roman Rally Living History – re-enacting Roman life in the Cranborne Chase
- Words in the Landscape – bringing together writers, poets and storytellers
- Voices in the Landscape – musicians engaging with the landscape with songs, old and new
- Characters of the Chase – characters brought to life through performance storytelling
- Artists' Residencies – inspiring works reflecting the landscape, history and culture of the area
- Celebration in Silk – working with artists to produce colourful silk flags
- Communities Caring for Heritage – grants scheme to assist communities celebrate heritage
- Memories Captured – capturing the true stories of local communities
- Ancient Ways – improving footpaths, cycle ways and new tramper routes
- Curious Dorset Cursus – celebrating the ceremonial and ritual use of the Neolithic earthwork
- ChalkEscape Walking Festival – annual walks and talks connecting people to the landscape

- More than 700 people have signed up as volunteers to undertake training, attend regular work parties or to assist with events related to the projects above, whilst many thousands more have attended events and activities.
- An ambitious desk exercise mapped a potential Long-Distance Heritage Trail around this National Landscape. comprising 360 miles in total; this has now been ground truthed and is ready to move forward after a range of consultations.
- In part through Chase & Chalke but also through the work of the National Landscape team, over sixty additional round walks and cycle routes have been produced, many focussed around local villages and hamlets.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the generous funding through the governments Access for All funding in 2024/5 resulted in considerable investment in improving the accessibility and facilities of five environmental education establishments and local farms and parishes, all offering bespoke opportunities for the less able, under-represented or hard to reach groups to access, learn more about and enjoy the farmland or countryside of the National Landscape.
- 2022-24, first year students from Kingston Maurward Agricultural College have enjoyed walks, talks and workshops within the National Landscapes as an introduction to their Countryside Management course.

- National Landscape Annual Forums have taken place with up to 100 representatives from local organisations attending each one, to hear about the work of this National Landscape and to encourage future involvement.
- The National Landscape team gives many presentations to parishes and interest groups.

Key issues

1. The Governments Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 set out multiple goals regarding the environment and its connection to people, one being: '*We will conserve and enhance the beauty of our natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone*.' Their Action Plan will:
    a. Improve access to nature
    b. Protect our landscapes and their heritage
    c. Nature for wellbeing
    d. Connecting children and nature
2. The Chase & Chalke Scheme has achieved much to assist with the above. The legacy of the scheme will be to expand the reach of the Scheme to continue to conserve and enhance heritage through the engagement of communities and volunteers throughout the remainder of Cranborne Chase National Landscape. The main issue with that ambition centres on drawing down additional funding to enable that to take place. The Chase & Chalke team comprised 4.5 FTE who will leave after June 2025. There is a need for several knowledgeable, experienced rangers to plan, coordinate and lead this activity on the ground.
3. There is certainly great potential in Cranborne Chase National Landscape to achieve the above ambition as Cranborne Chase National Landscape is accessible in half an hour to two thirds of a million residents from the major conurbations of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch with a further 120,000 people on its doorstep in the surrounding market towns. This potential is restricted for many however by very scarce public transport.
4. Relevant health professionals may not currently be aware of the breadth of opportunities the National Landscape offers for improving physical and mental health and wellbeing. It can be difficult finding and engaging with the most relevant health professionals with ongoing pressure on the National Health Service.
5. Working with schools and youth groups has been a substantial part of Chase & Chalke, increasing awareness of the natural classroom on the doorstep of the many schools and higher education establishments in and around the National Landscape. To continue this work, the capacity of the National Landscape team must increase.
6. The Rights of Way across the National Landscape do not form a true 'network'; there remain gaps where routes could be linked up. Neither signage nor maintenance is consistent across the area, which can lead to a variable quality of experience. Reduced County Council budgets for maintenance results in a greater reliance on local groups and volunteers to undertake practical work. The Rights of Way teams have some volunteer engagement and the National Landscape can now help build on these initiatives. Accessing the countryside sustainably implies the need for more effective provision and use of public transport by rail and road.

7. There is a growing interest in learning and developing traditional rural skills with communities suggesting hedge laying, scything, charcoal burning, thatching, weaving and stone carving, are of interest. There is a recognised loss of traditional countryside skills in the National Landscape including the skills needed to repair or restore historic buildings. From the success of the Chase & Chalke team, evidence shows the extensive interest in actively learning about the area's natural, historic and cultural heritage; there is potentially much latent interest also. The National Landscape Partnership retains a desire to have a centre or hub for academic and life-long learning and volunteering within the National Landscape. Those colleges offering such learning are too distant from the National Landscape and those interested cannot attend daily without personal transport.

The Issues Explained

14.4. Rural public transport is scarce within and around the National Landscape. There are regular, if infrequent, bus routes east/west between Shaftesbury, Blandford and Salisbury that do take in some villages however north/south routes are rare. Visiting Cranborne Chase National Landscape from the conurbations to the south (Bournemouth/Poole) is prohibitive without private transport.

14.5. For those who may visit more regularly for informal walking or cycling, the promotion of day-visits and longer packages have been assisted by the 60 new routes defining length of walk, difficulty, refreshment stops and 'nuggets' of innovative interpretation along the way. Throughout the 983 square kilometres however, much more of this is required. It is important that the Health and Wellbeing Boards, together with the relevant professionals, are made aware of the potential opportunities for improving lives through access to the quality environment of this National Landscape. Key benefits can include better physical and mental health and guarding against future illness; therapeutic and restorative qualities which enhance recovery; reduced social isolation, greater community cohesion, and opportunities to establish lifelong healthy behaviours. Outdoor activity, contact with nature including stargazing can also help improve sleep patterns, reduce stress, improve mood and self-esteem, and provide meaningful social contact.

14.6. The National Landscape and relevant partners should encourage communities to take the opportunity to 'refresh mind, body and soul' here, through promoting the area as a 'natural health centre'. The green gym concept, developed by The Conservation Volunteers, provides people with a way to enhance their fitness and health while taking action to improve the environment. Developing regenerative rural tourism within the National landscape and communities would assist in enhancing physical and mental wellbeing.

14.7. 'Green social prescribing' is a concept becoming popular with GPs. This should be developed and promoted by the National Landscape together with the Health and Wellbeing Boards and relevant partners. A full annual programme of guided walks, talks and activities by knowledgeable, experienced and appropriately trained staff or volunteers would tempt more frequent visits from both within and outside the National Landscape as shown by the ChalkEscape Walking Festival over the past four years.

14.8. There is acknowledged support for a central hub or community base, for all types of volunteering, countryside skills training, together with an information and interpretative centre for visitors. This could be achieved through a multifunctional National Landscape 'Living Landscape Centre'. This concept has generated interest from a wide range of people and organisations, many of whom

would become partners. As partners, they would help devise training and volunteering programmes that will harness the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of many.

14.9. As well as providing a focus for this nationally important landscape, a Living Landscape Centre could offer:

- Accredited training opportunities in countryside management skills, conservation, agriculture, forestry, livestock/animal husbandry and a variety of rural industry skills (e.g. blacksmithing).
- A wide range of volunteering opportunities including natural history ID and surveys, further historic research, and countryside management tasks.
- Exciting recreational opportunities such as guided walks, dark night skies events, and utilising all terrain mobility scooters for the less able.
- An opportunity to take part in or attend various art-based activities or events focussed on the special qualities of the National Landscape.
- Professional, environmentally related CPD training courses for environmental professionals locally, regionally and from further afield, which could include for example, countryside, agricultural, forestry and land agency staff, those attached to the Protected Areas family, the renewable energy sector, and teachers/lecturers. Participants would be encouraged to stay locally.
- A Living Landscape Centre for the area would provide information, interpretation, what there is to see and do in the National Landscape and surrounding market towns, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more locally.
- A facility for hire to external companies or organisations wanting to hold their own events or seminars.
- Environmental play schemes during the holiday periods, encouraging exchange of town/ country experiences for young people.

14.10. Countryside management tasks led by competent and experienced staff, complimented by volunteers, will help to conserve and enhance the landscape of the National Landscape. The construction and running of the centre will demonstrate best practice. The intent is to use a variety of sustainable construction techniques and methods. It will demonstrate the use of green energy sources such as wood chip and solar power. Where feasible, volunteers or trainees will complete some of the construction work. The skills gained through the centre will improve the job prospects of trainees.

14.11. The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape. A revival in such skills, and the ability to make a living from using them, should be encouraged.

14.12. Young people in the area must travel a long way to attend county agricultural colleges and other training centres. For many potential students of all ages, the lack and cost of public transport mean that accessing countryside skills training can be very difficult. Access to accredited training needs to be made available closer to their homes.

14.13. The Chase and Chalke LP Scheme had involvement and learning embedded as a key element of all the individual projects but it should also be the foundation of the scheme legacy. Such a Living Landscape and Centre would enable lifelong involvement and learning for all.

Outcomes and Policies

WIL A Improved health and well-being opportunities for everyone within and around the National Landscape are further developed and promoted throughout the area and beyond.

WIL1 Opportunities for improving health and wellbeing in the National Landscape should be created, improved and promoted, removing barriers to access, including where appropriate, the provision of: green and blue spaces within easy reach of communities; walking, cycling and riding routes, including routes for less able people, those with pushchairs or mobility scooters; opportunities to access and interact with nature; and volunteering and personal development opportunities.

WIL2 NHS Boards, networks and partnerships, relevant health professionals, Local Nature Partnerships and relevant funding initiatives should make greater use of the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. Green prescribing can include supporting exercise and activities in the area's countryside; the popular Walking Festival and other opportunities to improve health and wellbeing of communities and visitors alike

WIL3 The National Landscape Team and partners should investigate further funding opportunities to enhance the Rights of Way / countryside access network for all, including enabling better and more inclusive access for the less able.

WIL B A wide range of opportunities exist for schools, residents and visitors to learn more about the area, volunteer, or develop heritage and countryside skills that conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, while improving people's mental and physical health.

WIL 4 Children and young people resident within and around the National Landscape should be provided with environmental education opportunities to experience the area through direct contact with the natural environment that will:

- support confidence building by overcoming challenges;
- build social skills through team-working;
- improve mental well-being by reducing stress and anxiety, and improving mood; and
- reinforce learning and improve memory retention by involving multiple senses, such as touch, sight, and hearing.

Activities should develop an appreciation of the area and introduce an understanding of how to conserve it.

WIL5 Support and encourage effective voluntary activity, in all its shapes and forms, that helps deliver the National Landscape Management Plan.

- Develop an Involvement and Learning Strategy to increase learning, training and volunteering opportunities, improving countryside and heritage skills, throughout the National Landscape by the end of 2026.
- Develop and support networks of volunteers able to assist in specialist activities.

	• Engage a team of rangers to harness community and volunteer commitment and community engagement in the National Landscape and to develop programmes of volunteer and community activities. • Establish an environmentally and financially sustainable 'Living Landscape Centre' to act as the resource hub for the National Landscape Partnership, volunteers, trainees, students, residents and visitors. • Develop citizen science programmes to monitor the condition of the National Landscape. • Encourage and support Parish Councils to achieve high standards in working closely with each other, and with voluntary and community groups and meeting local needs and aspirations within the National Landscape.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Meaning of Natural Beauty

The concept of natural beauty is one of the cornerstones of legislation to protect landscapes in the UK. It has been the basis for the designation of national landscapes (AONBs) and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. It encompasses everything that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it[35]. It is widely accepted that natural beauty is, in part, due to human intervention, such as agriculture[36].

Natural England has developed a list of natural beauty criteria[37] to be used when assessing landscapes for designation as AONBs or National Parks, as outlined in the table below. It is Natural England's view that the practical application of the natural beauty criteria is identical for National Park and AONB designations, despite there being differences in the degree to which the criterion is clarified in the legislation[38]. So, for example, the extent to which wildlife and cultural heritage are factored into natural beauty assessments by Natural England is the same for both AONBs and National Parks. It is also the Government's formal position that the natural beauty required of an AONB and a National Park are the same[39].

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other factors may be relevant in some circumstances. Not all factors will be relevant in every case.

***Table of factors related to natural beauty*[40]**

Landscape quality - This is a measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape.

Scenic quality - The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses).

Relative wildness - The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape makes a particular contribution to sense of place.

Relative tranquillity - The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.

Natural heritage features - The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.

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[35] Countryside Agency (2001) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans*. A guide. Countryside Agency Publications. West Yorkshire

[36] Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

[37] Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England* (see Table 3 and Appendix 1).

[38] Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

[39] See Lords Hansard 20 Mar 2006 (Col 51) and Commons Hansard 13 June 2000 (Col 556W).

[40] Table extracted from the Natural England guidance Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

Cultural heritage - The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.

Appendix 2: International Union for the Conservation of Nature

The International Union for Conservation of Nature is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisations. It is a global organisation made up of many thousands of members. These members fall into three groups: State governments, non-governmental organisations, and individuals. It seeks to work with all these constituents to promote conservation and sustainability in the world. It is influential on global and national policies in these areas through a partnership approach.

The IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom (IUCN NCUK) works as a convening body, aiming to bring together members from across the IUCN spectrum and from outside in order to share information and to discuss approaches to influencing conservation policy and practice. IUCN NCUK also seeks to add value to UK conservation work by developing projects linked to IUCN activity.

IUCN Protected Areas Categories System

IUCN protected area management categories classify protected areas according to their management objectives. The categories are recognised by international bodies such as the United Nations and by many national governments as the global standard for defining and recording protected areas and as such are increasingly being incorporated into government legislation. National Landscapes come under Category V Protected Landscape/ Seascape.

A Category V Protected Landscape is defined as a protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant, ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

You can find out more about IUCN at http://www.iucn.org/

IUCN UK reconfirms the value of National Landscapes (AONBs) - 5th July 2013

The reconfirmation followed three years of work with the IUCN UK by the National Landscape Association (NLA) consisting of input to developing IUCN's guidance on categorisation (The Putting Nature on the Map Project), open forum discussion and the drawing up of a Statement of Compliance, supported by evidence from across the National Landscape Family. This statement was accepted by the IUCN panel in June 2013.

Each individual National Landscape partnership provided further evidence to demonstrate that they meet the high standards demanded by the IUCN. The NLA compiled all evidence and presented this as an accompaniment to the Draft Statement of Compliance to the World Commission on Protected Areas UK Protected Areas Assessment Panel.

Appendix 3: European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention is a Treaty of the Council of Europe - not the European Union - that is freely entered into by individual state governments.

This landscape convention builds upon earlier European Conventions, such as Berne (1997) aimed at conserving wildlife and Granada (1985) and Valletta (1992) protecting architectural and archaeological heritage, and the international Rio Convention on biological diversity (1992).

The European Landscape Convention was adopted on 20 October 2000 in Florence (Italy) and came into force on 1 March 2004 (Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 176). It was signed on behalf of the UK government in 2006 and came into force in the UK 1st March 2007.

It starts from the fundamental acknowledgement;

> 'that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas.'

Importantly, it defines landscape in relation to people;

> 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors.'

The aims of the convention are;

> 'to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues.'

At a **national** level that means;

- Recognising landscapes in law as 'essential components of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity,'
- Establishing and implementing 'landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning,'
- Establishing procedures for the participation of the public, and local and regional authorities, in defining and implementing landscape policies,
- Integrating landscape into 'regional and town planning policies and in its environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies.'

Doing these things will require specific measures, set out in the Convention, covering;

- awareness raising,
- training and education,
- identification and assessment,
- landscape quality objectives, and
- implementation.

International co-operation should include;

- landscape dimensions within other programmes,

- mutual assistance and information exchange,
- cross-border landscape programmes, and
- a Landscape Award of the Council of Europe.

It is of particular significance that all landscapes are recognised in this Convention, and not just those that are already have some wildlife or natural beauty designation.

The Cranborne Chase National Landscape derives much of its beauty from its qualities of tranquillity, remoteness, and cultural heritage. It is also a living and working countryside that is very rural with relatively few householders for such a large area, and with substantial and significant settlements just outside its boundary.

National Landscapes in general, and Cranborne Chase National Landscape in particular, are well placed to demonstrate the three-pronged approach of protect, manage, and plan of the Convention in action:

- the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides a legislative and funding framework for the nationally important landscapes, with a requirement for each National Landscape to have a Management Plan with policies for conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- the composition of this National Landscape Partnership and its consultative working style enables wide participation of local people and organisations in defining and implementing landscape policies
- this National Landscape has established a Planning Protocol with its Planning Authorities to facilitate the incorporation of landscape matters into planning policies and practice
- CCNL is raising awareness that 'landscape matters' through our Landscape Character (2024) and Landscape Sensitivity (2007) assessments, our Management Plan covers policies for landscape protection, management, and planning, and our publicity and events
- the Historic Landscape Characterisation has been completed and the Historic Environment Action Plans are being implemented.

There are, however, still more things to be done.

The full text of the Convention, and further information about European Conventions can be found on the web at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/home

The rules for the European Landscape Award can be found at:

https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-award-alliance

Appendix 4: The 'seek to further' duty

Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023[41] places a duty on relevant authorities[42] that they must seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes[43] (the 'seek to further' duty). With regards to national landscapes, this requirement has been incorporated into Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, which now states:

> 'In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'.[44]

This replaces the previous version of Section 85 of the CROW Act, which required relevant authorities to have regard to the statutory purpose of national landscape designations.

The 'must seek to further' duty is intended to ensure that the natural beauty of protected landscapes (including national landscapes) will be enhanced (i.e., left in a better state) because of relevant authorities exercising or performing their functions.

The LUR Act confers powers on the Secretary of State to make provisions for how a relevant authority is to comply with the 'seek to further' duty, including what the authority may, must or must not do to comply with the duty. It is also anticipated that the Government will provide guidance on how the duty should be applied in due course. However, the duty is not dependent on these provisions or on this guidance – it is in force now, and must be complied with as part of any decision or course of action that has implications for these protected areas.[45]

Natural England states that:[46]

- The duty 'must seek to further' is an active duty, not a passive one. Any relevant authority must take all reasonable steps to explore how the statutory purposes of the protected landscape (A National Park, the Broads, or an AONB) can be furthered.
- The new duty underlines the importance of avoiding harm to the statutory purposes of protected landscapes but also to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of a protected landscape. That goes beyond mitigation and like for like measures and replacement. A relevant authority must be able to demonstrate with reasoned evidence what measures can be taken to further the statutory purpose. If it is not practicable or feasible to take those measures the relevant authority should provide evidence to show why it is not practicable or feasible.
- The proposed measures to further the statutory purposes of a protected landscape, should explore what is possible in addition to avoiding and mitigating the effects of the development, and should be appropriate, proportionate to the type and scale of the development and its implications for the area and effectively secured**.** Natural England's view is that the proposed measures should align with and

[41] Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (link).
[42] 'Relevant authority', in this context, includes any Minister of the Crown, public body, statutory undertaker or person holding public office.
[43] 'Protected landscapes' means national parks, the Broads and national landscapes.
[44] Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (link).
[45] Landmark Chambers (2024) *Re: section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.* Instructed by the Campaign for National Parks. (Link). Paragraph 2a.
[46] This advice (link – Annex 2) was submitted, in December 2023, by Natural England, as a statutory consultee, to the Examining Authority for the examination of the Lower Thames Crossing, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

help to deliver the aims and objectives of the designated landscape's statutory management plan. The relevant protected landscape team/body should be consulted.

Appendix 5: Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

The Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework identifies 10 targets, specifically for protected landscapes:[47]

Thriving plants and wildlife	
TI 1	Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042
TI 2	Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
TI 3	For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
TI 4	Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
TI 5	Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.
Mitigating and adapting to climate change	
TI 6	Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
TI 7	Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050. (Not applicable to the Cranborne Chase National Landscape)
TI 8	Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).
Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment	
TI 9	Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
TI 9a	Metres of accessible path as a % of total path
TI 9b	Number of accessible toilets and rest stops
TI 9c	Number of disability accessible parking spaces
TI 9d	Number of accessible gates and gaps
TI 9e	Number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment
TI 9f	Number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the Protected Landscape boundary
TI 9g	Number of volunteer days
TI 9h	Number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved

[47] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework

TI 9i	Policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers
TI 10	Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

Appendix 6: Policy context

This Management Plan has been prepared within an international, national, regional and local framework of other strategies and plans. How does it 'fit' within the array of current and emerging plans?

Integration

This Plan seeks to integrate with other statutory plans and strategies that have influence over the area. It can highlight those policies that have direct bearing on the primary purpose of National Landscape designation, emphasising their importance and relevance to the area. It is a two-way process, through which the National Landscape Management Plan and other strategies can reflect, inform and support each other. All plans and policies that relate to the National Landscape and surrounding areas have been consulted in the preparation of this Plan that seeks, in turn, to influence other plans and policies where appropriate.

Shared aspirations

The Plan does not seek to over-ride other strategies and plans, but to build on them, presenting the highest shared aspirations for the National Landscape. Whilst incorporating and supporting best practice from other plans, the National Landscape Plan endeavours to go beyond other plan objectives and policies in the best interests of the National Landscape.

Sustainability

The primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, whilst accommodating the social and economic needs of local communities, is very close to the concept of sustainability. Sustainability can be defined as the management of change to meet equitably the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.

In the context of this Plan, sustainability means ensuring that environmental, economic and social needs can be met whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Policy Context

INTERNATIONAL
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International importance, especially waterfowl habitat (1971) www.ramsar.org
Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979) (came into force on 1 June 1982) www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/bern/default_en.asp
Paris Agreement United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015) http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php
EUROPEAN
The Birds Directive (Directive on Conservation of Wild Birds) (79/409/EEC) (Adopted 1979) http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm
The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention) Council of Europe (121) 1985 http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=121&CM=1&CL=ENG
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised 1985) http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/143.htm

Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) (1991)

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1991:375:0001:0008:EN:PDF

The Habitats Directive (Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora) (Directive 92/43/EC) (1992)

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http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/landfill_index.htm

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) (2000)

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

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http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1_EN_ACT_part1_v7%5B1%5D.pdf

NATIONAL

Legislation

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Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1979/46/pdfs/ukpga_19790046_en.pdf

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/pdfs/ukpga_19900009_en.pdf

The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994 SI 1381

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1994/1381/contents/made

Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents

Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006

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Planning Act 2008

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents

Climate Change Act 2008

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents

Localism Act 2011

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents

The Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (Habitats Regulation) as amended in 1997, 2000 (in England only) and 2017 (SI 1012)

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made

European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017

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National Planning Policy Framework (DLUHC 2023)

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Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 c. 55

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www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/08/19/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020/

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'The Natural Choice', the Natural Environment White Paper (Defra 2012)

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- Avon Vales National Character Area 117
- Blackmore Vale & Vale of Wardour 133
- Dorset Downs & Cranborne Chase 134
- Dorset Heaths 135
- Salisbury Plain & West Wiltshire Downs 132

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https://wenp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/WENP-Strategy-Final-Version.pdf

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https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/green-infrastructure/

LOCAL

The NL lies within the areas of 5 local authorities. Each produces strategies and plans that cover a similar range of topics that affect the NL. Many of the policies are similar. All will need to be considered during the SEA process.

Wiltshire Council

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Wiltshire & Swindon Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document (July 2009)

http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/waste-core-strategy-2009-july.pdf

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 3 - April 2011 to March 2026.

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The current plan (LTP3) ends in 2026 and the Council is drafting the fourth edition, which will be known as Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), covering the period to 2038.

Wiltshire Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2015 – 2025 (Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2)

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Wiltshire's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 to 2032 (2023)

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Wiltshire Council is preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. A draft version of the LNRS is in production. The National Landscape Management Plan should seek to embed appropriate policies.

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Dorset Council

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https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans/north-dorset-adopted-local-plan

East Dorset & Christchurch Local Plan (April 2014)

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/christchurch-and-east-dorset-local-plan-part-1-core-strategy

Dorset Local Plan – consultation draft (January 2021)

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/about-the-dorset-council-local-plan-january-2021-consultation

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy (2014)

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/minerals-strategy

Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Waste Plan (2019)

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/2019-waste-plan

Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/en/dorset-council-plan-2024-to-2029

Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 (LTP3) 2011

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/local-transport-plan-3

A new joint Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) is in preparation.

Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) 2011-2021

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/rights-of-way-improvement-plan?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DRights%2Bof%2BWay

Dorset Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 to 2023 (2020)

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2020-to-2023?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DHealth%2Band%2BWellbeing

Dorset Cultural Strategy 2021 to 2026

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/cultural-strategy-2021-to-2026

Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2020 to 2024

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-s-economic-growth-strategy-2020-to-2024

Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/natural-environment-climate-ecology-strategy-2023-25-refresh?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fp_l_back_url%3D%252Fsearch%253Fq%253DRights%252Bof%252BWay%26q%3Dclimate%2Bstrategy

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy

https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/about-the-local-nature-recovery-strategy

Hampshire County Council

Serving Hampshire - Strategic Plan 2021 to 2025 updated in 2023

https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/strategiesplansandpolicies/corporatestrategy

Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, New Forest National Park and South Downs National Park Minerals and Waste Plan (the 'Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan') 2013

https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/strategic-planning/hampshire-minerals-waste-plan

Local Transport Plan 4 (2024)

https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/localtransportplan

Hampshire countryside access plan 2015-2025

https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/countryside/accessplan

Hampshire County Council Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025

https://documents.hants.gov.uk/environment/Hampshire-Climate-Change-strategy-2020-2025.pdf

Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire

https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/nature-recovery-hampshire/hampshire-strategy

New Forest District

Local Plan 2016-2036- New Forest District outside the New Forest National Park (July 2020)

https://www.newforest.gov.uk/developmentplan

New Forest District Council Corporate plan 2024 to 2028 - For people, place, prosperity

https://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/3645/Corporate-plan-2024-to-2028

Somerset Council

(Note: only a very small part of the National Landscape lies within this administrative area)

Somerset- Mendip Local Plan 2006-2029 (December 2014)

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/?district=Mendip

Somerset South Somerset local plan 2006-2028 (March 2015)

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/?district=South+Somerset

Appendix 7: The eight landscape types in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

The landscape characteristics and qualities of the eight landscape types of this National Landscape are set out focusing on the additional issues and challenges that are particularly pertinent to each of them. Management Objectives are identified and the Management Plan policies and actions seek to address these issues and to reinforce and enhance landscape character.

Landscape type 1: Chalk Escarpments

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

- Character Area 1A - Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
- Character Area 1B - West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment
- Character Area 1C - Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpment

Key Characteristics:

- Dramatic chalk escarpments eroded into rounded spurs and deep combes.
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk giving rise to the predominantly calcareous soils.
- Areas of unimproved chalk grassland of international importance on steeper slopes.
- Field systems on the lower slopes, including strip lynchets close to medieval villages sited along the springline.
- Improved pasture and arable fields occupy the shallower, more accessible, slopes where straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure.
- Hanging woodland and sunken lanes are features of the steep, enclosing chalk coombes.
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscapes.

Issues and challenges

- Decreases in livestock grazing leading to loss of grassland habitat to scrub.
- Visibility of changes within the landscape and areas round it.
- A350 corridor, intensification of use and highway paraphernalia, and potential visibility of any development.
- Maintenance of heritage assets.
- Visibility of changes within the A30 corridor and associated Greensand Terrace fields.
- Management and renovation of Fovant Badges (and similar features).
- Conservation of historic features.

Strength of Character: Strong

Current Condition: Good - Moderate

Possible Future Trends:

- Decreases in livestock grazing leading to loss of grassland habitat to scrub.
- Heavy use of areas of CRoW Act access land can result in erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape. Visitor management, particularly in the aftermath of increased local usage and 'staycations' that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, will continue to be a priority.
- The prominent elevated character of the scarp may bring demand for construction of tall structures, including communication masts and possibly wind turbines.
- Increased efficiency of production may divert less productive arable land, such as the steepest slopes and areas with thinnest soils, to environmental management, such as reversion to chalk grassland.
- The evolving, post Brexit, Environmental Land Management schemes accessible to farmers will support continued environmental management of the landscape.
- Future trends in landscape condition look set to be stable in this area.

Management Objectives:

- Area 1A The overall management objective should be to conserve the uninterrupted landform, strong open skyline and the distinct mosaic patterning of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland and to seek opportunities to restore and enhance habitats and historic features.
- Area 1B The overall objective is to conserve the overriding sense of openness, the smooth undeveloped ridge, and the simplicity of the scarp landform. Within this open, pasture dominated landscape there are significant opportunities to restore and link areas of chalk grassland.
- Area 1C The overall management objective is to conserve the large scale, open character of the escarpments including their smooth flowing, rounded landform, distinctive pattern of woodland, peaceful perceptual qualities and ecological value. Restoration of lost and/or declining features such as the woodland rivers which occur in places along or near to the break of slope will improve condition, quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value.

Landscape type 2: Open Chalk Downland

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

- Character Area 2A - West Wiltshire Downs
- Character Area 2B - Southern Downland Belt

Key Characteristics:

- Large-scale landform of broad rolling hills intercepted by a dry river valley.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, regular field units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure.
- Remnant chalk grassland, ancient broadleaved woodland and Yew woodland are important habitats.
- Main roads cut across the undulating landscape linking major settlements on either side of the National Landscape.
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views.

- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads and the occasional downland village.
- Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments and Bronze Age Barrows.
- Later prehistoric and Romano-British ditches and defensive earthworks
- Beech trees line lanes and comprise formal avenues.
- Large blocks of woodland and coppice contrast with the open arable fields.
- Ancient route ways follow east-west ridges.

Issues and challenges

- Arable crop changes influenced by globalisation, commodity prices, farm inputs and costs impacting on both the aesthetics and the landscape functions.
- Exposed transport corridors - A303 / A350 / A354 - intensification of use and highway paraphernalia, and potential visibility of any development.
- Erosion and truncation of Ancient Monuments.
- Hedge planting blocking views and modifying the open, expansive, character.
- Fertilizer use and impacts on aquifers.
- Visual and soil impacts of extensive pig keeping.
- Rectangular, unsympathetic, 20th century game coverts.

Strength of Character: Strong

Current Condition: Moderate

Possible Future Trends:

- Potential diversification into other crops such as biomass crops and diversification of farm businesses into secondary enterprises such as farmhouse accommodation or commercial shoots.
- These new land uses may result in increased sense of enclosure.
- The evolving, post Brexit, Environmental Land Management schemes accessible to farmers will support continued environmental management of the landscape.
- Heavy use of areas of Open Access Land can result in erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape. Visitor management, particularly in the aftermath of increased local usage and 'staycations' that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, will continue to be a priority.
- There may be pressure for development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments, in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.
- Future trends imply that, although landscape character may change, landscape condition is likely to be stable in this area.

Management Objectives:

- Area 2A Overall, management of this landscape should conserve the simple, open character of the landscape, long views, sense of scale and remoteness. Management should also seek to restore key features that have been lost or are declining, such as areas of chalk grassland.

- Area 2B Overall, management of this landscape should endeavour to conserve the distinct downland landscape of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes whilst improving the condition of many of its characteristic features to increase visual unity and sense of integrity and make the combination and pattern of elements more distinct

Landscape type 3: Wooded Chalk Downland

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

- Character Area 3A - Cranborne Chase Wooded Chalk Downland
- Character Area 3B – West Wiltshire Downs Wooded Chalk Downland

Key Characteristics:

- An elevated downland landscape with dramatic intersecting coombe valleys and rounded upstanding ridges.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping higher ground.
- A well wooded landscape with large woods, shelter belts, copses, and clumps creating a series of enclosed spaces or 'rooms' surrounded by trees.
- Mosaic of unenclosed downland, improved grassland and arable fields, dating from 19th century enclosure, between the woodland.
- Chalk grassland and ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats.
- Typically low density, scattered settlement of individual farmsteads with the occasional downland village or Medieval hunting lodge.
- Visible archaeological features including Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows, prehistoric to Romano-British earthworks and field systems.
- Panoramic views from upstanding chalk ridges to adjacent ridges and into valleys/coombes.
- Beech lined lanes and tracks criss-cross the downland.
- Mosaic of unenclosed downland, improved grassland and arable fields, often dating from 19th century enclosure, between the woodland.

Issues and challenges

- Conservation of heritage/archaeological interests.
- Impacts of climate change on mixed farming and forestry/ancient woodlands.
- Connectivity between woodlands and maintenance of enclosures.
- Hedge and screen planting, coupled with reduced management, blocking views and modifying character.
- Declining coppice management.

Strength of Character: Strong

Current Condition: Good - Moderate

Possible Future Trends:

- The evolving, post Brexit, Environmental Land Management schemes accessible to farmers will support continued environmental management of the landscape.
- Heavy use of areas of Open Access Land can result in erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape. Visitor management, particularly in the aftermath of increased local usage and 'staycations' that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, will continue to be a priority.
- Impacts of climate change on mixed farming and forestry/ancient woodlands.
- There may be pressure for development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments, in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.
- Future trends imply that landscape condition is likely to be stable in this area.

Management Objectives:

- Area 3A The overall management objective should be to conserve the distinctive classical English landscape created by the dramatic chalk valleys, ridges and plateaux, diverse woodland, copses, shelterbelts, avenues and parkland trees. In particular, there is a need to re-invigorate woodland management within this area.
- Area 3B Overall, management of this landscape should conserve the simple, open character of the landscape, occasional long views, sense of scale and remoteness. Management should also seek to restore key features that have been lost or are declining, such as areas of chalk grassland.

Landscape type 4: Downland Hills

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Area:

- Character Area 4A Martin - Whitsbury Downland Hills

Key Characteristics:

- A series of small scale but prominent knolls and hills.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology giving rise to argyllic brown earths.
- Land cover is predominantly arable, with improved pasture on lower ground towards the River Valleys.
- Dominated by a pattern of medium to large Parliamentary enclosure type fields.
- Deciduous and coniferous woodland silhouette against the skyline, clothing the crests of the slopes.
- Low density, dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads.
- The absence of major roads contributes to the feeling of remoteness and tranquillity.
- A number of ancient woodlands including Burwood, Lower Breach Copse and Boulsbury Wood (SSSI).
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, prehistoric and Romano-British enclosures, settlements, field systems and linear boundaries and hillforts contribute to the plethora of visible historic features of the landscape.
- Panoramic views with open skies from hill tops

Issues and challenges

- Conservation of archaeology and ancient woodlands.
- Development pressures on the villages.
- 'Horsiculture' and changes in sense of place.
- Decrease in agricultural stock grazing.
- There has been some encroachment of arable cultivation onto chalk grassland and open downland in the past - this is particularly noticeable on the visible chalk bluffs and hillsides.
- The presence of coniferous forestry plantations jars with the soft outlines of the deciduous woodlands and hill-top copses.
- Some scrub encroachment is visible on downland turf

Strength of Character: Strong

Current Condition: Good

Possible Future Trends:

- The evolving, post Brexit, Environmental Land Management schemes accessible to farmers will support continued environmental management of the landscape.
- Heavy use of areas of Open Access Land can result in erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape. Visitor management, particularly in the aftermath of increased local usage and 'staycations' that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, will continue to be a priority.
- There may be pressure for development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments, in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.
- Development pressure in and around villages.
- Future trends imply that landscape condition will probably be stable in this area.

Management Objective:

Area 4 The overall management objective should be to conserve the pattern and contrast of the landscape created by the open areas of arable downland and distinct pattern of woodland, including copses on the summits of the hills and the tracts of ancient woodland that form a dramatic backdrop to the open downland.

Landscape type 5: Chalk River Valleys

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

- Character Area 5A - Wylye Chalk River Valley Sides
- Character Area 5B - Ebble Chalk River Valley Sides
- Character Area 5C - Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys
- Character Area 5D - Ebble Chalk River Valley Floor
- Character Area 5E - Wylye Chalk River Valley Floor

Key Characteristics:

- Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry valleys, but in some places quite wide (e.g. Ebble).
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation.
- The clear, fast flowing chalk rivers and streams are a key habitat.
- The floodplains support water meadows, cress beds and damp pasture.
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, with the Wylye Valley containing a trunk road and railway.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period.
- A series of linear springline villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.
- The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors to access organised events.

Issues and challenges

- Water flows and water resource management.
- 'Horsiculture' and loss of sense of place.
- Development pressures (expensive properties, high demand, gentrification, replacement dwellings).
- Highways , transport corridors, and road 'improvements'.
- Shoot and Event management
- Chalk grassland conversion
- Infrastructure clutter (e.g., telephone and electricity poles, signs).

Strength of Character: Strong - Moderate

Current Condition: Good - Moderate

Possible Future Trends

- The evolving, post Brexit, Environmental Land Management schemes accessible to farmers will support continued environmental management of the landscape.
- Heavy use of areas of `Open Country' under the CRoW Act, and of public rights of way can result in erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape. Visitor management, particularly in the aftermath of increased local usage and 'staycations' that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, will continue to be a priority.
- Future trends imply that landscape condition will probably be stable in the future.

Management Objectives:

- Area 5A The overall management objective should be to conserve the strong visual unity of the valley, the diversity of semi-natural habitats and the pattern of springline villages and to restore boundary features.
- Area 5B The overall management strategy should be to conserve the dramatic character of the landform, the distinctive settlement pattern on the valley floor and to restore declining features such as wet woodlands, meadows, chalk grassland and boundary features.
- Area 5C The overall management objective should be to conserve the strong visual unity of these valleys, the pattern of linear villages and semi-natural habitats, and to restore declining features such as wet woodlands, meadows, chalk grassland, valley side woodlands and boundary features.
- Area 5D The overall management strategy should be to conserve the distinctive settlement pattern on the valley floor and to restore declining features such as wet woodlands, meadows, chalk grassland and boundary features.
- Area 5E The overall management objective should be to conserve the strong visual unity of the valley, the diversity of semi-natural habitats and the pattern of springline villages and to restore features such as wet woodlands, meadows and boundary features.

Landscape type 6: Greensand Terrace

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

- Character Area 6A - Fovant Greensand Terrace
- Character Area 6B - Kilmington Greensand Terrace

Key Characteristics:

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and greensand hills rise.
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary enclosure.
- Large geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent Greensand Hills.
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value.
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing.
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment, frequently along either side of the boundary between the Greensand Terrace and Chalk Escarpment landscape types.
- Tree belts provide shelter around dispersed and isolated farmsteads.
- Settlements tend to be at the interface with, or within, the Greensand Hills.
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks.
- Long views across adjacent landscapes
- The landscape provides the setting of views from the escarpments and hills.

Issues and challenges

- A30 corridor.
- Highway paraphernalia, traffic volumes, and loss of tranquillity.
- Field sizes, hedge management, intensification of farming, and reduced ecological value.
- Inconsistent management of the linear woodland rivers at the base of the adjoining scarp.
- Sustaining best and most versatile land in agriculture whilst enhancing ecological values.
- Development pressures.
- Visual intrusion of farm buildings.

Strength of Character: Strong - Moderate

Current Condition: Moderate

Possible Future Trends:

- The evolving, post Brexit, Environmental Land Management schemes accessible to farmers will support continued environmental management of the landscape.
- There may be further pressure for new built development within the attractive villages as well as redevelopment of agricultural buildings to residential, amenity or industrial use.
- Future trends imply that landscape condition is likely to be stable in the future.

Management Objectives:

- Area 6A Overall, management of this landscape should conserve the simple, flat, open character of the landscape and the important (undeveloped) physical and visual relationship between terrace and escarpment. Restoration of lost and/or declining features such as field boundaries and woodland rivers will improve condition, quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value.
- Areas 6B The overall management strategy should conserve the open farmed character of the terrace with its distinct pattern of settlement and the contrast with the adjacent escarpment. Restoration of lost and/or declining features such as field boundaries and woodland rivers which encroach in places along the southern edge of the area will improve condition, quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value.

Landscape type 7: Greensand Hills

This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Areas:

- Character Area 7A Donhead - Fovant Hills
- Character Area 7B Penselwood - Longleat Hills

Key Characteristics:

- Upper Greensand is exposed as a band between the older clays and younger chalk between Mere and Wilton; elsewhere the hills overlook the Greensand Terraces.
- The Greensand typically forms upstanding ridges and hills that have been eroded by tributaries of the major rivers into a series of rounded knolls and deep valleys.

- Hills and ridges support a large proportion of woodland, both deciduous and coniferous.
- Extensive woodlands 'hide' recreational development, e.g. Centre Parcs, and create a sense of enclosure.
- Country houses and estates, some very large and spreading across the Greensand Terraces, are set within landscaped parkland, and contribute to the scenic beauty of the area.
- Distinctive patterns of settlement include villages hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys.
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hill tops.
- Ancient and narrow sunken lanes wind their way through the hills.
- Small and irregular fields characterise areas of agricultural land use.
- Meadows and wet woodland are typical of the valley floors.

Issues and challenges

- Heritage conservation especially in parklands with visitor pressures.
- Infrastructure clutter (e.g., telephone and electricity poles, signs).
- Viability and impacts of commercial forestry.
- Reduced livestock grazing.
- Limited access due to narrow lanes.
- Traffic and development leading to loss of character and tranquillity.
- Enlarged replacement dwellings.

Strength of Character: Moderate - Strong

Current Condition: Good

Possible Future Trends:

- There may be further pressure for new built development within the attractive villages as well as redevelopment of agricultural buildings to residential, amenity or industrial use.
- The presence of coniferous planting and coupes means rate of change in the landscape is potentially rapid - felling of large coupes results in instant change and sharp lines on the hills.
- There may be an improvement in woodland structure and management.
- Overall, future trends imply that landscape condition may decline in the future.

Management Objectives:

- Area 7A The overall management objective should be to conserve the rich mosaic of land uses and the contrast between the shaded, enclosed coombes and exposed hills. Woodland conservation and management is key in this wooded landscape.
- Area 7B The overall management objective should be to conserve the woodland, parkland and the mosaic of pastures and meadows that characterise the landscape. Woodland conservation and management is key in this wooded landscape.

Landscape type 8: Rolling Clay Vales

14.14. This Landscape Type comprises the following Landscape Area:

- Character Area 8A - The Vale of Wardour

Key Characteristics:

- Predominantly clay vale occupying a series of eroded anti-clinal axes between the chalk downlands.
- Varied underlying geology with different geological exposures leading to outcrops of hard rock.
- A mixed agricultural landscape with small scale fields of lush, improved, pasture and arable production with water meadows on the valley floor.
- Wooded character, with broadleaf and mixed woodland and copses (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale, reinforced by bushy hedgerows bounding most fields.
- Layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of Medieval settlement, clearance, and farming.
- A predominantly enclosed landscape, with close views limited by hedges, and frequent ups and downs resulting from the varied geology.
- Narrow, twisty, lanes.
- Rivers and their tributaries meander through the vale.
- A further sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding upland landscapes.
- Villages dispersed over the floor of the vale.

Issues and challenges

- Viability of family farms and dairying.
- Field enlargement, loss of hedges, overmature trees
- Water regimes (Nadder and Sem rivers).
- Road network limitations, transportation engineering, and vehicle accessibility.
- Infrastructure clutter (e.g., telephone and electricity poles, signs).
- Greater benefits from the railway, and associated parking needs.
- Development pressures, particularly around Tisbury, reuse of traditional and old buildings, and potential loss of character.

Strength of Character: Strong

Current Condition: Moderate

Possible Future Trends:

- There may be a further decline in tree population as trees reach maturity, and loss of the distinctive black and white signposts that are falling into disrepair.
- There is also likely to be further pressure for new built development within the attractive villages as well as redevelopment of agricultural buildings to residential, amenity or industrial use.

- This landscape could see a great change in the future and the trends stated here imply that landscape condition may decline in the future.

Management Objective:

- Area 8A The overall management objective for the Vale of Wardour should conserve the pastoral character of the vale and the diversity of habitats. The key features that unify the landscape must be conserved such as the consistent use of building materials and the presence of scattered trees. Restoration of many key features, such as the hedgerows and characteristic rural signage is also required to enhance the sense of intactness and continuity across the landscape.

Appendix 8: Why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

Introduction

This appendix sets out why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Cranborne National Landscape (including why a higher biodiversity net gain requirement would be appropriate in the National Landscape, compared to neighbouring, non-designated areas).

Statutory purposes, duties and powers The Cranborne Chase National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The statutory purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.[48] Local authorities and other 'relevant authorities' have a statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.[49] Local Planning Authorities also have the statutory power enabling them to take action to accomplish this purpose.[50]

Public authorities also have a statutory biodiversity duty[51] that the Environment Act 2021 introduced. Under this duty they "*must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England*."

Link between natural beauty and biodiversity

Natural heritage (including biodiversity) is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of AONBs.[52] As such, the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is an important consideration when seeking to further the purpose of AONB designation.

Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *'the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in [AONBs]'*.[53]

Biodiversity Net Gain and the Seek to Further Duty

Research by the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) has identified that increasing biodiversity net gain (BNG) delivery from 10% to 20% does not significantly affect viability. [54]

A recent Wildlife and Countryside Link report on BNG refers to that KNP research.[55] It also states that Defra's own research[56] has shown that 10% BNG is the minimum that is required to ensure no net loss. So, it could be argued that to deliver a genuine gain in biodiversity, you need to have a BNG figure higher than 10%.

The University of Kent's research into BNG outcomes for early adopter councils shows that certain loss of biodiversity is being traded for the promise of unverifiable gains at some point in the future.[57]

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[48] Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.
[49] Section 85 of the CROW ACT 2000.
[50] Section 84 of the CROW Act 2000.
[51] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty
[52] Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designations as National Park or AONB in England*. Table 3, page 13, and Appendix 1, page 25.
[53] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *National Planning Policy Framework*. Paragraph 189, page 54.
[54] https://cieem.net/kent-assesses-20-biodiversity-net-gain-requirement/
[55] Wildlife and Countryside Link (2024) *Biodiversity Net Gain: more than a fancy offset?* (link).
[56] https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net-gain/supporting_documents/181121%20%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20publication.pdf. The relevant section is 5.1.1, page 18.
[57] zu Ermgassen, S.O.S.E., Marsh, S., Ryland, K., Church, E., Marsh, R., Bull, J. W. (2021). *Exploring the ecological outcomes of mandatory biodiversity net gain using evidence from early-adopter jurisdictions in England*. Conservation Letters. 14: e12820. https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12820

This is relevant to the new statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of protected landscapes designation (i.e. for national landscapes, to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the protected landscape). As outlined above, natural heritage / biodiversity is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of a national landscape. If 10% BNG is the minimum that is required to ensure no net loss, then 10% BNG isn't necessarily enhancing the natural beauty of the area, in this regard, it is just ensuring no net loss. For actual enhancement of natural beauty (in relation to biodiversity), it could be argued that a BNG figure of more than 10% is necessary.

Landscapes Review, Government response and '30 by 30'

The Government-commissioned Landscapes Review Final Report[58] proposes that:

- national landscapes[59] should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries;[60]
- national landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature;[61]
- there should be stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes, including 'recover, conserve and enhance... biodiversity';
- strengthened [AONB] Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery.[62]

The Government's response to the Landscapes Review Final Report states that:

- Working with... AONBs in the coming years, we will ensure our protected landscapes boost biodiversity.[63]
- Our vision for protected landscapes is a coherent national network of... nature-rich spaces... Protected landscapes will drive forward nature recovery.[64]
  - The Prime Minister has committed to protect 30% of UK land for nature by 2030 (30 by 30)[65]...Achieving 30 by 30 will rely on improvements in how these areas are protected and managed for nature recovery.[66]
  - We will put our protected landscapes at the heart of delivering our nature recovery... policies.[67]
  - Given their spatial scale, and track records in planning and delivering landscape-scale restoration projects, protected landscapes could play a particularly important role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.[68]

[58] Defra (2019) *Landscapes Review Final Report*.
[59] The phrase 'national landscapes' relates to AONBs and national parks.
[60] Proposal 4, page 52.
[61] Proposal 1, page 36.
[62] Proposal 3, page 43.
[63] Landscapes review: government response. Foreword.
[64] Landscapes review: government response. Introduction.
[65] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to- protect-30-of-uk-land-in-boost-for-biodiversity. This press release implies that the 30% figure includes the entirety of AONBs: *'Existing National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other protected areas already comprise approximately 26% of land in England. An additional 4%... will be protected to support the recovery of nature'. However, the Government's response to the Landscapes Review states that 'at present, under their current statutory purposes, level of protection and management, protected landscapes cannot be said to contribute towards 30 by 30 in their entirety'.*
[66] Landscapes review: government response. Since the publication of the review - nature and climate.
[67] Landscapes review: government response. Chapter 2: Nature and climate.
[68] Landscapes review: government response. The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

- We will explore ways for protected landscapes to support responsible authorities in preparing [Local Nature Recovery Strategies].[69]
- By strengthening the first purpose [of protected landscape designation] for nature... we will ensure these areas can contribute to this ambitious commitment for biodiversity and our wider nature recovery ambitions.[70]
- We will strengthen this purpose [to 'conserve and enhance'], making it clear that we need to actively recover nature in these areas, rather than simply conserve what remains.[71]
- A core function of protected landscapes should be to drive nature recovery.[72]

The Government report 'Delivering 30by30 on land in England'[73] states that '30by30' will be delivered across three themes:

1. Strengthening.
2. Extending and creating.
3. Investing.

Measures identified under the 'strengthening' theme that relate specifically to protected landscapes include:

- Action through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act to enhance Protected Landscape management plans and place a stronger requirement on partners such as local authorities and public bodies to contribute to their delivery.
- The creation of a new partnership between the National Landscapes Association (formerly the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), National Parks England, National Trails UK and Natural England to deliver a range of exciting projects and programmes on nature recovery and widening access to nature. The partnership will also boost opportunities for private sector investment in our Protected Landscapes.
- A new outcomes framework for Protected Landscapes, which will set targets for their contributions to national environment and climate commitments, to be embedded in their management plans. We are also updating Protected Landscape management plan guidance to ensure consistency.
- Our response to the consultation on implementing the Landscapes Review, which sets out our action plan for Protected Landscapes.

Measures identified under the 'investing' theme that relate specifically to protected landscapes include:

- Committing to invest £100 million in thriving farming businesses through our successful Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme. More than 5,000 farmers and land 8 of 15 managers have engaged with the programme, delivering projects that achieve outcomes for climate, nature, people and place.
- Investing in National Parks Partnerships and the National Landscapes Association to build the capacity to create a pipeline of projects to generate more private finance in Protected Landscapes.

[69] Landscapes review: government response. The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.
[70] Landscapes review: government response. The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.
[71] Landscapes review: government response. A stronger mission for nature recovery.
[72] Landscapes review: government response. A stronger mission for nature recovery.
[73] Department of Farming, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) (2024) *Delivering 30by30 on land in England* (link).

- Pledging a further £15 million to support our existing National Parks and National Landscapes, helping to support our most iconic landscapes.

The report also states that protected landscapes will be at the heart of 30by30.

As such, protected landscapes (including National Landscapes) are clearly a vital component of delivering the 30by30 commitment (i.e., ensuring that 30% of land in England is managed for nature).

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

The Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework identifies several biodiversity-related targets, specifically for protected landscapes, that are relevant to the National Landscape[74] (see Appendix 5).

Target 1 is to restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites, by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).[75] It is important to note that the Target 1 figure of 250,000 hectares is half of the Government's target of creating or restoring 500,000 hectares in England by 2042[76]. So, protected landscapes are expected to deliver 50% of the national (England) target for habitat restoration / creation even though they only cover 25% of England. In other words, protected landscapes will be expected to restore / create three times as much wildlife-rich habitat, per unit area, as land outside protected landscapes.

Colchester Declaration

The 'Colchester Declaration', launched in 2019, is a formal commitment by the family of National landscapes, under the umbrella of the National Landscape Association, to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

The commitments include that, by 2030:

- At least 200,000ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in National landscapes will be in favourable condition.
- At least 100,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/restored in National landscapes.
- At least 36,000ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in National landscapes following the principle of the right tree in the right place.

[74] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework

[75] This is half of the national target (including areas outside protected landscapes) of restoring or creating 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat, outside protected sites, by 2042 (link), even though protected landscapes only cover 25% of England.

[76] The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, in 2018, introduced a target to create or restore 500,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected landscapes network (link – page 26). This target was reiterated in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan, in 2023, which specified that this target would be met by 2042 (link – page 31). This target became legally binding in the Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023 (link). This target is also reiterated in the Government's '30by30' policy paper (link – page 7).

Appendix X: Summary of the timetable and key outputs from consultation

A workshop on Management Plan priorities at the Annual Forum, April 2024 plus priorities for Nature Recovery.

Repeated during the seven days of the Chalke History Festival in June 2024 and at 2023 and 2024 Planning Seminars

Cabinet

9 December 2025

New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s): Cllr Parry, Cllr Hobbs-Chell, Cllr Julie Robinson, Cllr Shortell, Cllr Skeats, Cllr Bryan, Cllr Goringe, Cllr Atwal, Cllr Todd, Cllr Morgan, Cllr Lugg, Cllr Parkes, Cllr Chakawhata, Cllr Tooke, Cllr Bartlett, Cllr Piers Brown, Cllr Coombs, Cllr Flower, Cllr Gibson.

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title:
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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

1.1 Evidence commissioned by the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) identifies a likely significant increase in impact of recreational activities on the New Forest Heaths (the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar) arising from the increase in population that results from new development. The New Forest Heaths are protected under the Habitat Regulations, and the impact is similar to that on the Dorset Heaths.

1.2 The evidence looks at the impacts of visitors to the New Forest Heaths. It considers the distance people travel to the heaths and how this influences their activities and visits. It draws together some project types that could mitigate the impact of the increase in visitor activity.

1.3 As a much larger area and with the higher profile that the National Park brings, the New Forest Heaths attract visitors from much further afield than Dorset Heaths. The evidence concludes that 75% of visitors travel from areas up to

13.8km from the New Forest Heaths boundary. This includes eastern parts of Dorset. The evidence also indicates that larger developments of around 200 dwellings and over within 15km of the New Forest Heaths boundary are likely to have a significant effect on the New Forest Heaths and a second buffer is applicable to these sites (see Appendix 2).

1.4 Reflecting the evidence of recreational impact on the New Forest Heaths sites, Natural England have issued advice that the Council should not be authorising any additional residential development within the 13.8km impact zone or 15km for larger sites, without first securing appropriate mitigation. At present, Dorset Council is not granting planning permission for any residential development within either impact zone.

1.5 The NFNPA have led a group of 9 local authorities in developing a New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy 2025 (Appendix 1) that will enable the Council to resume granting planning permission in the identified impact zones. The strategy requires a contribution from new residential development towards the provision of mitigation in a similar way to the existing Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework.

1.6 The contributions vary between the affected local authorities based on frequency of visit and likely activity. For the eastern Dorset area within the impact zone, a contribution of £400 per dwelling is required. Contributions to the mitigation scheme will be subject to inflation annually using the Retail Prices Index. A proportionate approach will be applied to other over-night accommodation in a similar fashion to that for the Dorset Heaths and this will be developed on proportional contributions basis.

1.7 An agreement to enable the transfer of funds has been drawn up between the Council and NFNPA (yet to be signed) to enable mitigation to be secured. As a temporary measure the Council will pay into the NFNPA's existing mitigation scheme whilst a new scheme and governance structures are established. Unused monies from this interim scheme will be transferred into the new scheme once established. The agreement for transfer of funds has been written such that it can also be applied to the new partnership scheme once established.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

a) agrees the New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy 2025 in principle, with agreement to delegate any minor changes to the final version of the Strategy to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning,

b) agrees to apply the Strategy within the 13.8km buffer and 15km buffer for larger sites to allow planning permissions to be granted,
c) agrees that, as an interim arrangement, secured funding is transferred to the NFNPA to extend their existing mitigation scheme whilst the new partnership scheme is being established,
d) delegate the agreement of guidance on proportional contributions for other over-night accommodation to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 As a result of the evidence and on the advice of Natural England, Dorset Council are currently unable to grant planning permissions for new residential development within the 13.8km and 15km impact zones associated with the New Forest Heaths protected sites. This is because new homes within the impact zones result in an increase in recreational pressure on the New Forest Heaths and currently there is no mechanism in place to mitigate this impact. The New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy is the proposed approach for putting in place a long-term mechanism for delivering mitigation and enabling residential planning permissions to be granted.

3.2 Whilst the final arrangements for the Strategy's implementation are being put in place, temporary arrangements are proposed involving an expansion of the existing New Forest mitigation scheme to cover the affected parts of Dorset. This would enable planning permissions to be granted within the zones of impact. Once the Strategy's partnership mitigation scheme is in place any remaining funds from the interim arrangements will be transferred to the new mitigation scheme.

3.3 If Dorset Council was not part of the partnership mitigation scheme proposed in the Strategy, the Council would need to develop its own scheme which may be complicated to achieve given that the Council does not have any jurisdiction over the New Forest. As a consequence, planning consent for new homes in the impact zones could not be granted until alternative arrangements are developed and implemented.

4. The report

4.1 The New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy 2025 (Appendix 1) sets out a framework and broad approach to ensuring that the cumulative impacts of new housing within the impact zones can be addressed. All

affected authorities have been working together to develop an agreed approach as established in the Strategy. The report focuses on mitigation measures within the New Forest Heaths designated sites, which will complement the package of measures being delivered by planning authorities within their own respective areas. Natural England have been advising the partnership on the development of the Strategy.

4.2 The evidence also identified that there is likely to be a need for additional infrastructure projects to deflect visitors from the more sensitive sites in the New Forest. Dorset Council commissioned a further report to look at the synergies between the mitigation projects delivered to mitigate impacts on the Dorset Heaths and that required for the New Forest Heaths. This additional report concluded that infrastructure projects delivered to mitigate the impact of new development on Dorset Heaths will be sufficient to provide enough strategic green space in Dorset without needing to contribute to additional green space to mitigate the impact on the New Forest Heaths. However, there is a need to provide strategic access management and monitoring measures for the New Forest Heaths to address the residual impacts from new housing in Dorset.

4.3 The Footprint Ecology New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring evidence was informed by an earlier Footprint report on the discussion and analysis relating to the New Forest SAC/SPA and a zone of influence for recreation, which draws on the findings of visitor surveys previously carried out, and identified a buffer zone of 13.8km based on the 75th percentile of local visitors (travelling from home). It also identified the potential impact from larger sites beyond 13.8km, up to 15km.

4.4 The joint New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy 2025 sets out a package of strategic access management and monitoring measures to mitigate the impacts from increased recreation associated with new housing growth on the New Forest Heaths. The strategy focuses on plan-led growth within the defined 13.8km zone of influence from the edge of the New Forest Heaths and covers the anticipated level of growth (around 45,000 dwellings in total across the zone of influence) to 2036. It is envisaged that this New Forest SAMM Strategy will be reviewed based on the latest evidence and monitoring data and continue to operate beyond this end date. However, should development rates increase considerably (as identified through monitoring), there may be a need for a more detailed review of the approach.

4.5 The package of mitigation measures relates to access infrastructure, engagement and monitoring and will cost around £22 million. Many of these costs are for 80 years (perpetuity), whilst other costs are for a shorter period and subject to a 5 year or 10 year review. The shorter-term projects are costed as

such as they may not be needed for the longer term or a more appropriate approach may be implemented making them superfluous.

4.6 The per dwelling tariffs are calculated based on visit rates from each local planning authority area within the zone of influence, providing a tiered tariff structure that means new housing coming forward closer to the New Forest's designated sites will contribute more than that further away. The SAMM strategy provides a framework and broad approach that ensures cumulative effects of housing can be addressed and that all nine planning authorities within the defined zone of influence are working together to a consistent, agreed approach.

4.7 As mitigation of the impact on the New Forest Heaths is a new requirement, a full mitigation scheme is yet to be established. Further work is needed to put the necessary legal and administrative arrangements in place and set up the joint scheme. In the meantime, mitigation can be secured by contributing towards the existing NFNPA mitigation scheme to enable it to cover the areas of Dorset that are affected by the mitigation requirement. Once the new scheme is set up then any unused funds can be transferred to the new mitigation scheme. A legal agreement is being drawn up that will be suitable for the stand alone NFNPA scheme and any subsequent partnership mitigation scheme.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The Strategy is a joined up and coordinated approach to managing the impact of recreation on the New Forest Heaths protected area. An alternative to not adopting the approach in the strategy would be to not grant consents within the zone of impact. which could mean that we struggle to effectively meet the housing needs of this part of Dorset.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 As the competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, Dorset Council has to consider the impact on protected habitats sites and should only grant consents for development that is likely to cause an impact in very special circumstances where there are considered to be imperative reasons of overriding public interest. It is not considered that the delivery of new homes that would have an impact on the New Forest protected sites would meet the test of imperative reasons of overriding public interest. A mitigation approach is therefore necessary to grant planning permission for development resulting in overnight accommodation within the New Forest Heaths zone of influence.

6.2 The Council's legal team are currently working with the New Forest National Park Authority to agree a process for making the necessary arrangements for transferring monies into the current, and any subsequent, mitigation scheme.

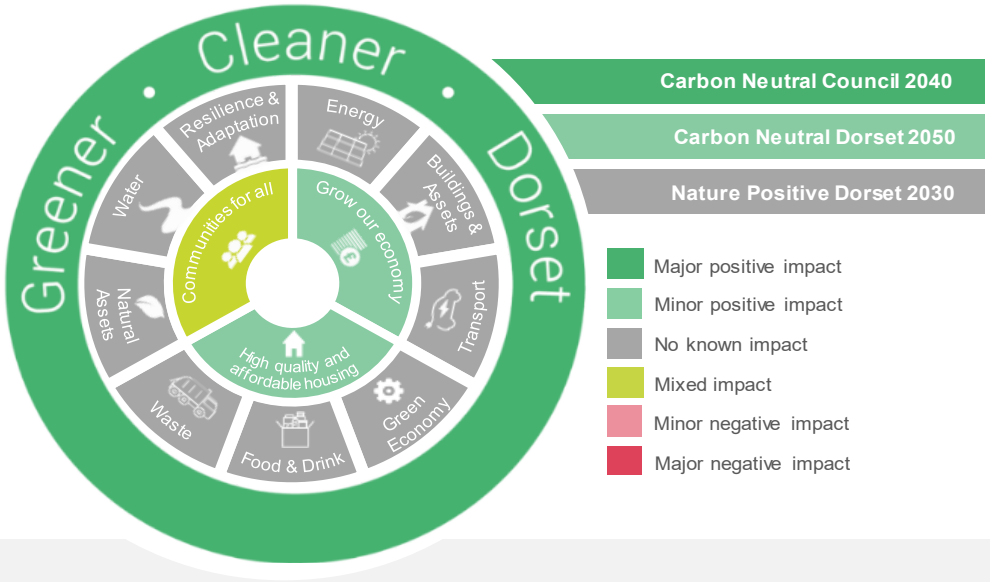
7. Financial implications

7.1 Mitigation will be funded through financial contributions from developers and secured through the planning process.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The projects funded by the Strategy will provide mitigation for the impact of recreation from new development on the protected New Forest Heaths. See Appendix 4 also.

New Forest Heaths Strategic Access Management and



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 There are no direct implications on well-being and health, although the projects to be funded should lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the New Forest Heaths.

10. Other implications

10.1 The main implication for the Council is not being able to meet the housing needs of the affected parts of Dorset. There are also reputational issues for Dorset if it does not put a mechanism in place to enable planning permissions to be granted and to mitigate the impact on the New Forest Heaths.

11. Risk implications

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

12.1 It has been agreed that an EqIA is not required for the New Forest Heaths Recreation Strategy

13. Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft New Forest Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy October 2025

Appendix 2 Map of 13.8km and 15km zones

Appendix 3 Visitor use of the New Forest by residents of Dorset and implications for the Dorset Local Plan

Appendix 4 Climate and ecology implications.

14. Background papers

Natural England advice regarding recreational impact on New Forest Heaths.

The New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring evidence report 2023 by Footprint Ecology;

Discussion and analysis relating to the New Forest SAC/SPA and a zone of influence for recreation

Recreation use of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar: New Forest visitor survey 2018/19

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer),

the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

New Forest
Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy

November 2025 Draft

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1. Introduction

Overview

The New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy report (Footprint Ecology, 2023) sets out a framework and broad approach to ensuring in-combination effects of housing can be addressed and that all authorities are working together to an agreed approach. The report focuses on mitigation measures within the New Forest's designated sites, which will complement the package of measures being delivered by planning authorities within their own respective areas. Natural England has endorsed the report recommendations.

This SAMM Strategy sets out a package of access management and monitoring measures to mitigate the impacts from increased recreation associated with new housing growth on the New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. The strategy focuses on plan-led growth within the defined 13.8km zone of influence from the edge of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar and covers the anticipated level of growth (around 45,000 dwellings) to 2036. It is envisaged that this New Forest SAMM strategy will be reviewed and continue to operate beyond this period, based on the latest evidence and monitoring data.

The package of mitigation measures relates to access infrastructure, engagement and monitoring and will cost around £22 million in perpetuity. Per dwelling tariffs are calculated based on visit rates from each planning authority within the zone of influence, providing a tiered tariff structure that means new housing coming forward closer to the New Forest's designated sites will contribute more than that further away. The SAMM strategy provides a framework and broad approach that ensures in-combination effects of housing can be addressed and that all nine planning authorities within the defined zone of influence are working together to a consistent, agreed approach.

1.1 This Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy has been jointly prepared by the nine planning authorities within the defined 13.8km 'zone of influence' from the boundary of the New Forest's internationally designated sites. The Strategy has been prepared in liaison with Natural England and Forestry England and is designed to complement the mitigation measures being delivered by individual planning authorities within their own administrative areas, which typically focus on new and enhanced greenspace provision (including Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)). This Strategy ensures the overall package of mitigation includes measures within the New Forest's designated sites, in recognition of the fact that new greenspace alone will not deflect all recreational pressures arising from planned new development.

New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar - overview of designations

1.2 The New Forest is one of the largest tracts of semi natural vegetation in the country and is one of our most important wildlife sites. The area hosts three international wildlife designations – the New Forest Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation and Ramsar.

1.3 The New Forest is classified as a **Special Protection Area (SPA)** for its breeding and overwintering bird species of European importance, in accordance with the European Birds Directive. The designation relates to internationally significant breeding populations of Dartford Warbler, Nightjar, Woodlark, Honey Buzzard, Hobby and Wood Warbler and over-wintering Hen Harrier.

1.4 The New Forest is also designated as a **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** for its habitats and non-avian species of European importance. This designation reflects the unique mosaic of habitats across the New Forest, which includes eight Annex 1 habitats (encompassing heathland, grassland, woodland, wetland, bog and open water), together with three Annex 2 species - Stag Beetle, Southern Damselfly and Great Crested Newt.

1.5 Also relevant is the New Forest's listing as a **Ramsar site**, under the Ramsar Convention. This recognises the international importance of the site as a wetland, supporting wetland flora and fauna of international importance, and adding to the global network of Ramsar wetlands.

Recreational uses of the New Forest – impacts and benefits

1.6 The New Forest National Park was designated in 2005 and encompasses the whole of the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations. The New Forest is the most intensively visited of the UK's 15 National Parks and also has the highest concentration of internationally designated wildlife sites of any of the UK national parks.

1.7 Visitor levels to the New Forest National Park are estimated to be over 15 million visitor days (RJS Associates Ltd., 2018). These visitors include local residents visiting for short visits directly from home, as well as those visiting from further afield that include day trippers and staying tourists. Not all of the 15 million visitor days are to the designated sites that comprise over half of the National Park. Visitor surveys of the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar undertaken by Footprint Ecology in 2018/19 showed that for most people visiting the designated sites, dog walking (55%) or walking (26%) are the main recreational activities undertaken.

1.8 Within the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar sites open access to many areas is a legal right. There are in excess of 30,000 hectares of unenclosed land where people can walk freely and this includes the heaths, woodlands and other habitats managed by Forestry England, the National Trust, Hampshire County Council and others. There are around 150 formal car parks that provide access onto the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar sites.

1.9 A challenging issue for UK nature conservation is how to respond to increasing demand for access without compromising the integrity of protected wildlife sites. Visits to the natural environment have shown a significant increase in England as a result of the increase in population and a trend to visit the countryside more. As well as changing demand for access, the type of access is evolving. There is a strong body of evidence showing how increasing levels of access can have negative impacts on wildlife. Issues are varied and include disturbance, increased fire risk, contamination and damage.

1.10 The issues are not, however, straightforward. It is now increasingly recognised that access to the countryside is crucial to the long-term success of nature conservation projects. Access also brings wider benefits to society that include benefits to mental/physical health and economic benefits. Government policy is also promoting countryside access in general (e.g. through enhancing coastal access).

New Forest 'zone of influence' and the need for a strategic mitigation approach

1.11 Planned housing growth in the area surrounding the New Forest's internationally designated sites - as set out in respective local development plans of the relevant planning authorities - has been identified as having potentially harmful impacts on the nature conservation designations. A large volume of background evidence sets out the links between where people live and recreation use of the Forest and the impacts associated with such use.

1.12 In order to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar sites from new development, the surrounding local planning authorities have established a range of mitigation measures over the last decade. These include the provision of alternative natural greenspaces to deflect access, and some authorities (e.g. New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority) have established measures within the designated sites of the New Forest, such as funding for an increased ranger presence.

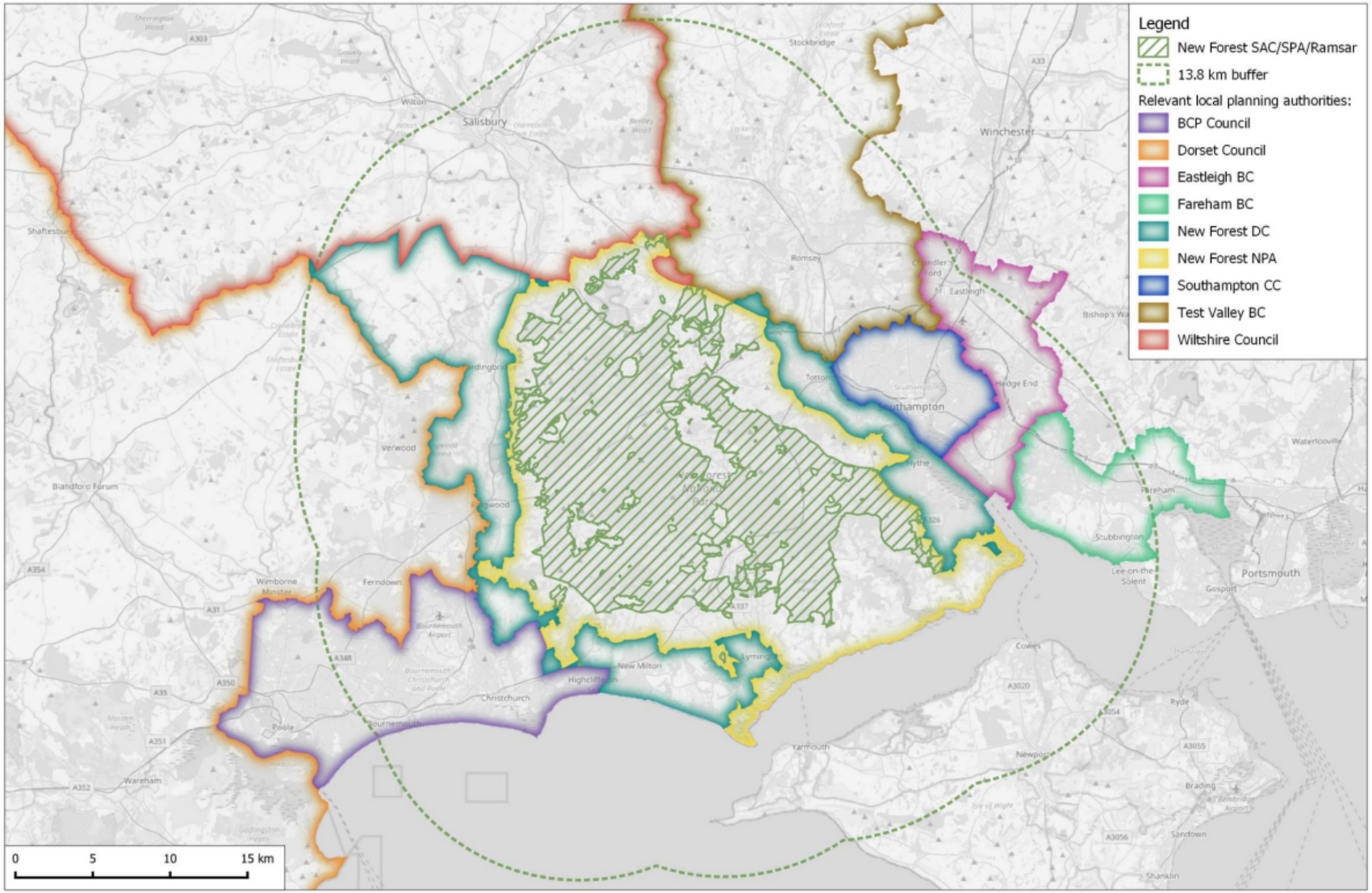
1.13 In line with the extensive evidence studies and advice from Natural England, it has been recognised that housing growth within 13.8km of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar will have the potential to generate cumulative recreational impacts. This 13.8km zone (shown in Map 1 on the following page) encompasses a wide geographic area and spans multiple authorities. The zone has been defined using the same methodology as that adopted for other strategic mitigation schemes in the country (e.g. Bird Aware Solent) and defines the 75th percentile (derived from the straight-line distance from the interviewee postcode to survey location) to identify where the majority of visitors to the New Forest's designated sites originate from. Natural England have endorsed this methodology and further information is set out in the report on 'Discussion and analysis relating to the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar and a zone of influence for recreation' (Footprint Ecology, 2021 and available here).

The need for a SAMM Strategy

1.14 This strategy has been prepared to ensure a comprehensive and joined up approach to mitigation across all relevant authorities (i.e. those that are within the 13.8km zone of influence). The alternative is that each local planning authority prepares a separate New Forest SAMM Strategy, which is inefficient and would not generate economies of scale in terms of the mitigation measures that can be delivered by working across local authority boundaries. **The provision of alternative recreational areas outside the New Forest's designated sites – including alternative natural greenspaces[1], enhancements to existing open spaces and improvements to recreational rights of way and other routes - designed to provide alternative destinations for recreation, local to where new housing is built, form a separate, discrete mitigation thread and are outside the scope of this strategy.** The delivery of local greenspace provision will remain the responsibility of the individual local planning authorities and this SAMM Strategy instead focuses on the mitigation measures delivered within the New Forest's designated sites themselves.

[1] This includes Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG).

Map 1: New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar and 13.8 km zone of influence.



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2. Policy background

The Habitats Regulations – precautionary approach and 'in-combination' tests

2.1 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Importantly, the most recent amendments (the Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019) take account of the UK's departure from the EU.

2.2 The Regulations provide strict protection for European sites and this extends to local plans and development management decisions. Local planning authorities, as public bodies, are given specific duties as 'competent authorities'. A competent authority should only approve a project or give effect to a plan where it can be ascertained that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site(s) (or exceptionally, if there is overriding public interest and no alternatives). This approach is often referred to and the 'precautionary approach'. The regulations also require competent authorities to consider both the cumulative impact of their decisions and the impacts of other relevant plans or projects – often referred to as the 'in-combination' test. Both of these legal principles support the preparation of a strategic, cross-boundary SAMM Strategy for the New Forest's internationally designated sites.

Summary of national and local planning policy approach

2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value in a manner commensurate with their statutory status. The NPPF also confirms that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

2.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) on 'Appropriate Assessment' confirms that all plans and projects (including planning applications) which are not directly connected with, or necessary for, the conservation management of a habitat site, require consideration of whether the plan or project is likely to have significant effects on that site. This consideration should take into account the potential effects both of the plan/project itself and in combination with other plans or projects. Where the potential for likely significant effects cannot be excluded, the competent authority must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site, in view the site's conservation objectives.

2.5 Where it cannot be concluded there will not be an adverse effect on a site's integrity without mitigation, there is then a need to consider potential mitigation. Mitigation measures are protective measures forming part of a project and are intended to avoid or reduce any direct adverse effects that may be caused by a plan or project, to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a habitats site(s). Any measures used to inform the decision about the effects on the integrity need to be sufficiently secured and likely to work in practice.

2.6 The local plans of the planning authorities in and around the New Forest have all been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRAs) and, where necessary, appropriate assessment. These legal assessments have highlighted potential impacts on the New Forest's designated sites from increase recreational pressures associated with planned new development. There is

therefore a need to identify robust and deliverable mitigation measures to enable planned development to proceed, while ensuring the integrity of the designated sites is not impacted.
Summary of evidence base studies

2.7 Following the receipt of central Government funding, local planning authorities in and around the New Forest – liaising closely with Natural England – commissioned a series of research reports from the specialist consultants Footprint Ecology to understand the impacts of recreation arising from planned development on the New Forest's international nature conservation designations and the potential for mitigation. These studies represent the most comprehensive survey of recreational use of the New Forest since 2004/5 when Tourism South East surveyed visitors to the area that became the National Park.

2.8 The following research reports on the recreational use of the New Forest have been published:

- Results of a telephone survey with local residents report, Footprint Ecology (2020)**:** 2,000 telephone interviews with people living in and around the New Forest (within 25km of the designated area). 70% had visited the New Forest in the last 12 months, with walking by far the most popular recreational activity undertaken.

- New Forest vehicle counts report, Footprint Ecology (2020): Counts of parked vehicles, on 15 dates spread through the year, at 270 parking locations across the designated area. Parking locations in central 'tourist' areas and in proximity to urban areas around the periphery were usually filled closer to capacity than those located elsewhere.

- New Forest Visitor Survey 2018/19 report, Footprint Ecology (2020): Over 5,000 face-to-face interviews, and counts of people, at 60 car parks and other access points. For most interviewees the main activity undertaken was either dog walking (55%), or walking (26%). Dog walking was focused on the periphery of the New Forest SPA, SAC and Ramsar.

- Overview of visitor results and implications of housing change on visitor numbers report, Footprint Ecology (2020): Nearly 130,000 new dwellings may be built within 25km of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar over the period to 2036. This would represent a 16.4% increase in housing within 25km. The research predicts this would result in an increase of around 11.4% in the number of visits to the New Forest's designated sites.

- Impacts of recreation and potential mitigation approaches report, Footprint Ecology (2020): A review of the impacts of people on designated sites; and an assessment of the relative effectiveness of a range of mitigation measures aimed at preventing such impacts.

- New Forest 'Zone of Influence' report, Footprint Ecology (2021): Following the publication of the research reports in 2020, the planning authorities commissioned Footprint Ecology to undertake additional work relating to the 'zone of influence' of the New Forest's designated sites. This follow-up work adopted methodology used in other strategic mitigation schemes in the country to define the catchment area within which new development would have an impact on the designated sites due to visitor pressure. Defining this catchment area provides a basis for the relevant planning authorities to seek mitigation for the recreational impacts arising from new development on the protected sites of the New Forest. Natural England endorses the conclusions of this and the earlier research reports and supports their use as the best available information.

- In late 2023 Footprint Ecology completed their final report on a recommended New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy. The report sets out a framework and broad approach to ensuring in-combination effects of housing can be addressed and that all authorities are working together to an agreed approach. The report focuses on mitigation measures within the New Forest's designated sites, which will complement the package of measures being delivered by planning authorities within their own respective areas. Natural England has endorsed the report recommendations.

2.9 The research reports identify a range of potential impacts from the projected increase in visitors to the New Forest arising from the planned new development. A range of avoidance and mitigation measures are identified and the reports recommend that a strategic, proportionate and co-ordinated approach is developed, which will require partnership working across a range of local authorities and stakeholders. This work builds on the existing approach taken by local planning authorities to mitigation and ensure that authorities are working to a consistent evidence base. The production of this joint SAMM Strategy is a key element of this joint working, providing a consistent and equitable approach for planning authorities and developers within the defined 13.8km zone of influence.

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures (SAMM)

2.10 Strategic Access Management & Monitoring measures are employed within internationally designated nature conservation site across the country. SAMM strategies focus on measures within the designated sites and typically complement the provision of additional greenspace (e.g. SANG) and enhancements to existing green infrastructure (e.g. rights of way) taking place outside the designated sites to form an overall package of mitigation measures.

2.11 The overall aim of the SAMM package is to comply with the Habitat Regulations by ensuring that adverse effects on integrity from recreational use associated with plan-led housing growth can be ruled out, alone or in-combination. This can be achieved through redistributing access in time or space; and changing visitor behaviour to reduce and avoid impacts.

2.12 The SAMM measures identified for the New Forest are broken down into three broad themes:

- Access infrastructure and projects;
- Engagement; and
- Monitoring

3. Scale of projected growth

Indicative estimates of housing change

3.1 Research undertaken by Footprint Ecology drew on data provided by the local planning authorities in the vicinity of the New Forest to estimate that anticipated levels of new housing could be around 129,222 new dwellings over the period 2018 - 2036 within a 25 kilometre radius of the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar. This was equivalent to a 16.4% increase in the number of dwellings and could potentially generate (assuming visit rates per dwelling were to remain constant) around 11.4% more visits to the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar.

3.2 More recent housing data have been provided by the relevant local planning authorities to inform this SAMM strategy. This data provides a snapshot of possible future growth from 2023 through to 2036 that would require mitigation (i.e. excluding planned development where mitigation for impacts on the New Forest's designated sites has already been secured). These estimates of housing growth are indicative, as each authority is at a different stage in their plan making and for those whose local plans are still at an early stage, the figures represent a best estimate at this point in time. In addition, there remains some uncertainty nationally regarding housing targets for local planning authorities. Totals within 13.8km of the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar are summarised in Table 1 and indicate an overall total of around 45,000 net new dwellings in the period to 2036 within the defined zone of influence.

Table 1: Approximate number of additional dwellings within 13.8km of the New Forest SPA/SAC/Ramsar to 2036, by local planning authority, requiring mitigation.

LPA	Approximate numbers of dwellings likely to come forward by 2036 and requiring mitigation
BCP Council	10,313
Dorset Council	3,144
Eastleigh Borough Council	6,663
Fareham Borough Council	2,572
New Forest District Council	3,204
New Forest National Park Authority	260
Southampton City Council	14,464
Test Valley Borough Council	1,650
Wiltshire Council	2710
Total	**44,980**

Role of alternative greenspace provision as a complementary measure

3.3 The housing figures provide an indication of the scale of change that requires mitigation. Some of the growth will be accompanied by strategic SANG (or, in the case of the New Forest District Council, Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace 'ANRG') directly linked to planned development. As such this SAMM strategy does not need to address all the recreation impacts associated with the overall quantum of growth, as SANG will provide some of the mitigation. There is however a recognition that new greenspace provision alone is unlikely to fully mitigate increased recreational pressures on the New Forest's designated sites (given the scale and draw of the designated sites). SAMM measures within the designated sites therefore form an important part of the overall recreation mitigation package, complementing new greenspace provision associated with planned new development.

4. Current mitigation and access management measures in place in the New Forest

4.1 Recreation has been managed in the New Forest for many decades. In 1972, following the development of a conservation plan (New Forest Joint Steering Committee, 1971), the current network of 147 formal car parks was created and cars were stopped from driving across the lawns and open land. In addition there are over 100 miles of designated off-road cycle tracks and a range of promoted walking routes in the New Forest. In the early 1990s the 40mph speed limit on unfenced roads was introduced within the Perambulation of the Forest. Partner authorities are clear that the SAMM measures set out in this mitigation strategy which focus on the impacts of new development need to fit with existing and planned visitor management.

New Forest Recreation Management Strategy

4.2 The New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy sets out a strategic direction for the management of outdoor recreation in the New Forest National Park from 2010 – 2030. It is important to emphasise that this strategy plays a wider role than that required to mitigate the impacts of recreation on the SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites arising from new development. The Recreation Management Strategy is much broader in its aims and relates to people visiting from anywhere, including people on holiday.

Existing mitigation frameworks

4.3 The majority of the planning authorities within the defined 13.8km 'zone of influence' from the New Forest's designated sites have established recreation mitigation approaches in place. Some of these are adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents and some are interim strategies. It is anticipated that elements of these will no longer be required following the publication of this joint SAMM Strategy, with other non-SAMM elements (e.g. greenspace provision within the administrative area of the planning authorities) retained. This will be clarified by each relevant local planning authority.

Other elements of visitor management

4.4 Many activities that take place within the New Forest are also covered under local byelaws (which are relevant on National Trust and Forestry England land) and all the main landowners require official permission for many activities (including commercial and non-commercial groups events). On the Crown Land of the New Forest, relevant activities that require permission range from organised races and charitable events to scientific study. Forestry England encourage groups to apply for permission and organise activities and events formally, as this ensures there is a good understanding of what is taking place and a system for appropriate management and control has been established. This ensures that more organised activities and events are not relevant to this SAMM Strategy as mitigation is already in place. The SAMM Strategy instead focus on the impacts of planned new development and enables the planning authorities to discharge their legal responsibilities as 'competent authorities'.

5. Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) package

5.1 Local planning authorities within the 'zone of influence' – liaising with Natural England – are clear that mitigation measures are required within the New Forest's internationally designated site to complement measures being taken within the local authority administrative areas. The latter includes greenspace provision and enhancements (i.e. SANG-type measures) and these will continue to play an important role as part of the package of mitigation measures.

5.2 The implementation of a SAMM package ensures a range of mitigation measures are delivered to protect the integrity of the New Forest's designated sites from the pressures of increased recreation arising from new development. The overall aim of the SAMM package is to comply with the Habitat Regulations by ensuring that adverse effects on integrity from recreation use associated with Plan-led housing growth can be ruled out, alone or in-combination.

5.3 The SAMM measures identified for the New Forest are broken down into three broad themes: (i) access infrastructure and projects; (ii) engagement; and (iii) monitoring. These measures have been selected based on the level of housing growth and scale of mitigation necessary. They are also consistent with SAMM packages delivered elsewhere in the country. Further detail of the measures to be delivered under each of these themes is set out in Appendix 1.

Project Manager

5.4 A Project Manager post will be required to oversee the mitigation work, keep the delivery on target, liaise with delivery partners, local authorities and stakeholders. The Project Manager will need to be a full-time post for the initial years of the strategy, particularly while the access infrastructure changes are taking place. In the long term it may be possible for the post to drop to a part-time role.

Table 2: Access infrastructure and projects

Access infrastructure and projects	
Element	Description
Parking	• The current distribution of the 140+ car parks within the New Forest's designated sites was established in the 1970s and the number of car parks, their distribution and the number of spaces they provide does not reflect what would be necessary if they were implemented from scratch now. The current situation does not focus recreational use in the more robust locations and does not necessarily fit well with the robust path and tracks network. • There is an opportunity to adjust or relocate existing parking provision within sensitive locations to more environmentally robust locations that can sustain recreational visitors, whilst limiting detrimental impacts on the rare habitats and species of the Forest. • Forestry England, working with the National Park Authority and other partners, are developing a spatial plan that sets a trajectory to fundamentally shift parking provision within the New Forest. It is anticipated that the plan will result in an overall reduction in the overall area of land used for parking, a

	reduction in the number of locations where parking is possible while retaining the same number of parking spaces. • While existing work has already taken place on the spatial plan, further work is required. Costs are therefore included within this SAMM Strategy to assist with implementation of the spatial plan. Given the current uncertainty around what will be in the spatial plan an indicative sum is allocated towards this element of SAMM and this will need revision over time.
Gateway projects	• There may be opportunities for the provision of additional access facilities connected to the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar which lie outside the European site boundary. Opportunities include adjacent farmland, paddocks or other land with no current public access and which could be made accessible, with the potential to set parking back and off the New Forest SPA, SPA & Ramsar and to provide dedicated areas for dog walking or other activities. • No specific cost has been allocated to such provision and it remains an option for local authorities to bring forward such measures through their own mitigation strategies for areas outside the New Forest's international nature conservation designation. Should opportunities arise, there could be scope to review the mitigation budget and reallocate monies if there is demonstratable mitigation benefit. These measures could also be part of the SANG component for relevant authorities.
Paths and tracks	• Maintenance of paths and tracks is a component in directing visitors and focusing use, helping to ensure visitors stick to the robust path network. Works on paths will link to the recreational spatial plan, and the car parks where use will be focused will need to have suitable path provision directly from the car park. • All maintenance work and any new sections of path would need to be undertaken sensitively to ensure use of appropriate materials and avoid any net loss of habitat. A range of key species depend on path/track edges and bare ground and any work will therefore need to be carefully planned and fit with the species and habitats present. Appropriate signs/waymarkers may also be required to direct visitors.

Table 3: Engagement

Engagement	
Element	Description
Ranger provision	• A mobile ranger team is a key component of strategic mitigation schemes such as those on the Solent, the South-Devon sites, the Thames Basin Heaths and the Dorset Heaths. In these areas the rangers form a mobile team that spend the majority of their time outside, talking to visitors, influencing how visitors behave and showing people wildlife. They also have a role in educating visitors, schools and other groups and so their role is wider than warden-type rangers. In these examples the ranger team is a discrete body whose purpose

	is mitigation delivery (rather than routine management, maintenance, membership recruitment or other such tasks). • Ranger time can be targeted to particular locations (e.g. around the periphery, car parks where particular uses or issues occur etc). Rangers can focus where there are particular concentrations of breeding or roosting birds or other sensitive wildlife. • In the long term the best approach will be to have a dedicated ranger team with a mitigation role that is clearly distinct and separate from other work streams. The National Park Authority People and Wildlife Ranger post (as funded by developer contributions in New Forest District Council) provides a potential model. This will ensure transparency, provide a clear separation from other duties of the delivery organisation and ensure consistency. In the short term the existing New Forest ranger forum will play a key role and close collaboration and shared working practices will be important. • A realistic approach is to initially aim for an increased ranger team of around 5 full-time staff; and for these roles and the scale of the team to be reviewed periodically. The role and need for ranger time is likely to change with time, for example as the number and distribution of car parks shifts. • The ranger team needs to be adequately resourced and this should include mobile information provision, printed material and social media content/support. The existing New Forest Code has been widely promoted and updated and has been widely distributed, but there is scope to increase how this is promoted, used and ensure it remains high profile for all visitors.
Targeted work with dog owners	• Dogs can cause particular issues in terms of contamination, disturbance and livestock worrying within the designated sites. Influencing dog walkers should be a target for mitigation delivery given the extensive use of the New Forest by dog walkers (over 50% of visitors to the designated sites are dog walkers). • The National Park Authority has already been working with the New Forest Dog Owners Group and have been running events. These could be extended, and 2 dog focussed posts are included in the SAMM Strategy to run regular guided walks, promote SANGs and areas for dog walking. In the longer term, working with relevant partners, there is the potential to establish a dog project, potentially learning from projects at other heathland sites such as Dorset, South-east Devon and the Thames Basin Heaths. There is also scope to link with the work being undertaken by Bird Aware Solent (who also have staff with a dog focus).
Fires	• Wildfire is an increasing concern with climate change. Access associated with recreational use of the designated sites plays a role in increasing the risk of fire (through barbeques, campfires, discarded cigarettes etc). • Due to the scale and changing risk from fires the SAMM Strategy includes elements to help address the additional risks from increased recreational use. A wildfire forum or some level of proactive co-ordination between partner agencies will increase awareness among staff and ensure all are prepared.

	Resources could also be used to support increased training and equipping of staff, for example through bringing in specialists to run training, review procedures and work with partners.

Table 4: Monitoring

Monitoring	
Element	Description
Visitor monitoring	• Monitoring is required to help inform mitigation, confirming efficacy or highlighting where additional measures or changes are required (e.g. focussing ranger time at key locations). Monitoring also plays a key role in furthering understanding about changes to recreation behaviour and how this may be impacting key biological features of the forest. • Visitor numbers can be quickly and effectively monitored by conducting regular vehicle counts at all of the forest car parks. This would be done through driving a set route around the Forest on several dates through the year, counting the number of parked vehicles at each parking location. To be repeated every 2/3 years to pick up changes over time.This would provide a metric for understanding levels of recreational use at different points through the year as well as identifying longer term trends in where visitors are going, feeding into the spatial plan and how ranger time is targeted to different locations. • Face-to-face visitor interviews carried out on-site would provide more detailed information on where visitors are coming from, how often they visit, where they go and their awareness of the Forest's ecology. This data will identify any changes in visitor patterns and behaviour over time and can be used to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures, informing future delivery.
Vegetation communities, key habitat features and species	• Any impacts of changes in recreational pressure and behaviour identified through visitor monitoring could be measured at 20 locations. Monitoring to include sampling vegetation in specified habitats; systematically recording visual signs of damage, deterioration or contamination linked in access; changes in key habitat features; and changes in breeding bird populations (e.g. within 1km of key locations, using standard methods). • Biological monitoring should be informed by local site knowledge working with the land manager's ecologists to ensure that the relevant features/habitats are selected for monitoring at each site. It should take into account any changes in management (e.g. prescribed burns, scrub management, habitat restoration etc. also changes to infrastructure e.g. car park surfacing or drainage). Timing should be reviewed, but every three years will be the initial approach. The monitoring of this strategy will supplement the existing monitoring of condition status and features already undertaken in the New Forest.

	• Biological monitoring should be reactive to how recreational behaviour changes and any external pressures that affect the designated sites. Its appropriateness and relevance should be agreed annually by partners. • The results from the different strands of monitoring will be used to assess changes in recreation impacts and inform further monitoring and mitigation measures.

Alternatives

5.5 As an alternative to making a contribution to this SAMM strategy, applicants may wish to consider the potential impacts on the New Forest's designated sites and propose their own appropriate measures for assessment. Applicants will need to provide sufficiently detailed evidence about the potential ecological impacts of their proposed development on the designated features, species and habitats of the protected sites and their proposed mitigation measures to demonstrate certainty of avoiding adverse effects in order to pass the appropriate assessment. It must be demonstrated conclusively that the bespoke mitigation measures will comply with the Habitat Regulations and there will be no likely significant adverse recreational effects on the designated sites.

5.6 Some proposed developments within the 'zone of influence' (due to their scale, type, or proximity of the proposed development in relation to the designated sites) will need to consider their 'alone' impacts on the designated sites. A contribution to this SAMM strategy may not be able to offset all the likely adverse impacts for these developments and applicants will need to engage at an early stage with their local planning authority and Natural England.

6. Implementation

Developer contributions and in perpetuity costs

6.1 Mitigation is secured for the duration of the impact and it is assumed the strategy will run for as long as it is required, adjusting as necessary to changing levels of house building and the impacts arising. Adjustments may also be made in response to the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy.

6.2 This SAMM mitigation strategy is based on the recommendations in the 'New Forest SAMM Strategy', Footprint Ecology 2023. As per this report, costs have been calculated to cover costs in the long term, with some measures involving implementation over many years (up to 80 years in total). This is considered to be 'in perpetuity' for the purposes of this strategy.

Per dwelling tariff

6.3 The cost of the SAMM mitigation package is around £21,628,060. The zone of influence is broad and encompasses a wide area and within the zone of influence there are around 45,000 new dwellings anticipated by 2036 that will require mitigation. Given the scale of the zone of influence, and the effect of Southampton Water, visit rates to the New Forest from housing in different local authorities vary, and in particular development that is close to the New Forest is likely to generate a much higher level of recreation use. This SAMM Strategy therefore adopts an approach whereby development closer to the designated sites – which generates more recreational visits per annum – is required to make a different contribution from development towards the outer parts of the zone of influence. Such an approach is supported

by the visitor data and ensures the contributions are fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development – one of the key tests in paragraph 57 of the NPPF (December 2023).

6.4 Using the data from the visitor survey in 2018/19 (Footprint Ecology), this SAMM Strategy is based on visit rates per local authority and this is used to apportion tariffs per local authority. This means that the per dwelling tariffs set out below are proportionate to the likelihood that a resident from that authority might visit the New Forest SPA, SAC & Ramsar. Having derived a figure for each authority the contributions have been simplified, with a set value for the two closest authorities (£2,700 per dwelling) and for all other authorities the tariff has been established by rounding up to the nearest £100 (Table 4).

6.5 The New Forest SAMM contribution tariffs will need to be inflation linked and adjusted annually. Each local authority will also need to add any relevant administrative costs and there is also the potential for each authority to vary the tariff according to dwelling type (e.g. flats vs houses) or number of bedrooms as is relevant to the authority. In those cases, adjustments may be necessary to ensure the overall required funds are collected. At this stage it is proposed that the SAMM contributions will be set on a 'per dwelling' basis. Addressing the impacts of new development on internationally designated sites is a matter of legal compliance and therefore considerations around development viability are unlikely to be engaged.

Table 5: Summary of visitor data, levels of housing growth anticipated for each authority that will require mitigation and the tariffs per authority

Local Planning Authority	Interviewees from home in original survey and within 13.8km (%)	Number of interviewees in original survey per 1000 dwellings 'visit rate'	Potential amount of housing needing to be mitigated (%)	Suggested per dwelling tariff	Overall contribution per authority based on suggested tariff and level of housing needing to be mitigated
New Forest National Park	874 (23)	56.0	260 (1)	£2,700	£702,000
New Forest District	1781 (48)	26.2	3204 (7)	£2,700	£8,650,800
Test Valley	154 (4)	6.3	1650 (4)	£700	£1,155,000
Wiltshire	147 (4)	5.8	2710 (6)	£600	£1,626,000
Dorset	108 (3)	3.9	3144 (7)	£400	£1,257,600
Southampton	268 (7)	2.5	14,464 (32)	£300	£4,339,200
BCP	290 (8)	2.4	10,313 (23)	£300	£3,093,900
Eastleigh	84 (2)	1.7	6663 (15)	£200	£1,332,600
Fareham	25 (1)	0.7	2572 (6)	£100	£257,200
TOTAL	**3731 (100)**		**44,980 (100)**		**£22,414,300**

Types of development

6.6 This strategy applies to future development, including those granted planning permission and coming forward via permitted development rights, that results in a net increase in residential accommodation (i.e. C3 Use Class), located within 13.8km of the New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar.

6.7 The potential for large sites over 200 dwellings beyond the 13.8km zone of influence and up to 15km to have an adverse impact is recognised. Reflecting the precautionary principle, this impact will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This assessment will take into account site-specific factors including the characteristics of the development proposal, both on-site and off-site mitigation measures as well as ease of access to the New Forest. Specific local planning authorities may identify lower thresholds for large sites in this zone taking account of specific circumstances.

6.8 Natural England's advice concerning adverse impacts arising from a phased development / allocation may be considered as final for subsequent phases where the overall parameters (residential dwelling number and type) of the development / allocation remain consistent at the time the advice was provided. The advice may be reviewed in the light of material changes – for example to the scale of the proposal or where updated or new evidence is available.

6.9 While the SAMM Strategy is focused towards C3 Use Class development, there are other uses and forms of development that may have impacts from recreation, such as:

- Houses in Multiple Occupation (sui generis);
- Residential institutions within the C2 Use Class where the residents are not severely restricted by illness or mobility;
- Student accommodation;
- Sites for gypsy, travellers and travelling showpeople;
- Tourist accommodation, including self-catering, caravan and touring holiday accommodation

6.10 For the above types of development, this SAMM Strategy provides a means of ensuring effective mitigation can be delivered, but each will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. While in general each unit for the above could be considered a single dwelling, there may be a need to adjust the rate of SAMM contribution for different types and off-site infrastructure provision will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, the SAMM rate could be adapted according to occupancy rates for tourist accommodation. Project level HRA for tourist applications will need to consider the location and type of use with respect to the New Forest, as for example a city centre hotel in Southampton would have a very different impact compared to a campsite around the periphery of the New Forest. Early consultation with the local planning authority and Natural England is advised where there is a level of uncertainty concerning potential adverse impacts.

Overlaps with other mitigation strategies

6.11 There are a number of other established mitigation strategies with a SAMM contribution that overlap the New Forest's 13.8km zone of influence. For example the 5km zone of influence for the Dorset Heaths covers BCP and part of Dorset Council areas; while the Solent mitigation strategy covers all areas within 5.6km of the relevant Solent European sites and this includes parts of New Forest District, New Forest National Park, Test Valley Borough, Southampton City, Eastleigh Borough and Fareham Borough.

6.12 As a general point of principle it is assumed that new development within the relevant zones of influence will need to contribute towards each different SAMM package, as the measures relate to different sites and issues. For example, a SAMM contribution towards the Dorset Heathlands will not fund additional ranger provision in the New Forest. While there might be some areas of overlap (e.g. around education work or awareness raising about fires on the Dorset Heaths and New Forest), the messages and issues are not directly equivalent and it cannot be assumed that measures designed for one site will work in the same way for another.

6.13 New green infrastructure and SANG could however potentially work for multiple European sites and there may not necessarily be a need for development to contribute or deliver multiple SANG sites. This is a matter for developers to discuss with their relevant local planning authority and Natural England at an early stage in the application process.

Governance

6.14 Certain elements within the SAMM mitigation package have the scope to adapt and flex as conditions and priorities change. Furthermore, it is possible that additional opportunities may arise, for example as a result of changing land ownership. It is important therefore that the governance is flexible and responsive enough to enable developer contributions to be shifted to different components of the strategy easily. Annual reviews of budgets and the ability for the Project Manager to adjust finances as appropriate (with rapid approval) will be key. Periodical adjustments to the level of contributions sought as a result of inflation and associated increases in both staff and materials costs will be required.

6.15 A key element of this New Forest SAMM Strategy is the importance of the various delivery partners who will need to undertake the SAMM measures. The Project Manager will oversee the commissions with these bodies, in line with authorisation from an oversight group comprising representatives from the local authorities. This approach is summarised below and will allow flexibility as priorities change, as the Project Manager can liaise directly with the delivery partners and gain necessary authorisation via the oversight group.



Figure 1: Overview of governance

Strategy review and monitoring/reporting

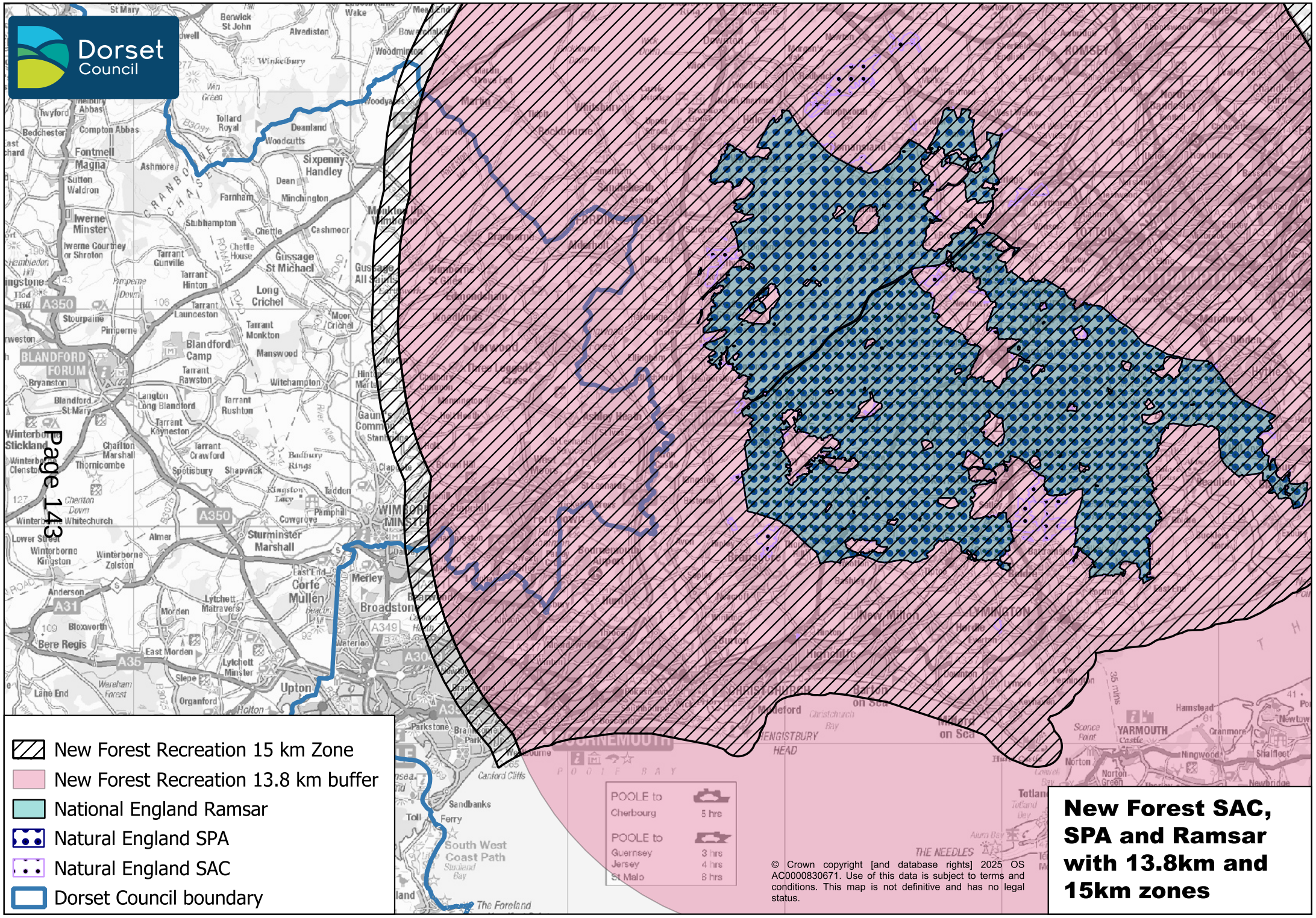
6.16 This SAMM strategy will be comprehensively reviewed and updated on a 5-year basis, providing the opportunity to adjust the key measures and overall approach. In the interim, annual reviews of the budget and adjustments will be necessary. **Measures (such as ranger provision) can be scaled up or down and phasing of implementation adjusted, as necessary, to accommodate changes in the volumes and distribution of housing.**

Appendix 1 – Breakdown of SAMM costs

Mitigation measure	One-off/Capital cost	Rolling cost	Multiplier for rolling cost	Total cost	Notes on how cost calculated
Redistribution of parking	£1,200,000			£1,200,000	Notional figure of £1m for works and £200,000 for design work, planning and assessment work. Spend would need to be spread over different years. Once established maintenance costs covered by Forestry England (as currently)
Robust tracks network improvements	£280,000			£280,000	Notional figure as precise details of works required to be established alongside spatial plan and car park works. Costs assume some changes to paths with around £100 per sq m for unbound paths and estimate of total length 2km. Plus 200m of board walks at £150 per sq m and 10 5m bridges at £5000 each. Costs likely to need to be spread over a number of years.
Path maintenance		£15,000	80	£1,200,000	Small annual budget to ensure paths and tracks maintained for recreation and addressing localised issues - could cover gates, path/track surface etc. Approx. £15 per sq m depending on type of maintenance / repair and an estimated 1000m of repairs per year. Potential for spending to vary with years and be pooled.
Verge parking	£50,000			£50,000	Notional cost to contribute towards low wooden posts, ditches, printed material etc, as required
Waymarking		£20,000	5	£100,000	Small budget for some additional markers and posts etc as required. Cycle route marker posts around £100 per post
Project Manager post		£59,000	50	£2,950,000	£40,000 annual salary, plus 35% (to cover NI, superannuation, etc.) and £5000 per annum support costs. Costed for 50 years on expectation of 10 years full time and around 70 years part time
Enforcement of PSPOs	£10,000			£10,000	budget to contribute towards training and other costs
Dog walking engagement officers		£90,656	10	£906,560	£27,000 annual salary, plus 35% (to cover NI, superannuation, etc.) and £15000 per annum support costs (to cover promotional material, transport etc). 2 posts for 10 years.
Increased ranger time		£201,640	50	£10,082,000	5 fte equivalent posts with costs extended to cover 50 years. £27,000 annual salary, plus 35% (to cover NI, superannuation, etc.) and £5000 per annum support costs. Some ranger provision potentially required in-perpetuity however team can shrink over time as SANGs and infrastructure changes become relevant. 50 years for 5 posts gives potential for size of team to be regularly reviewed and potential for it to shrink or expand (in short term) as priorities require and ensure in perpetuity coverage.
Ranger training and collaboration		£2,500	5	£12,500	Annual budget to fund joint training, facilitation etc. Short term as in longer term potential to ensure clearer divides in responsibility and roles

Mitigation measure	One-off/Capital cost	Rolling cost	Multiplier for rolling cost	Total cost	Notes on how cost calculated
Ranger resources (vehicles)		£9,950	80	£796,000	£32,000 EV purchase, replaced every 10 years, £1500 for livery, £2000 p.a. insurance, 5000 miles p.a. at 0.25p per mile electricity. Assumed to be rolling annual cost for 2 vehicles.
Wildfire forum		£5,000	10	£50,000	Flexible resource to allow specialist training, strategy support, collaboration between organisations and awareness raising among staff of risks. Relatively short term (20 years) as increased ranger provision and spatial plan will reduce risks in long term.
NF destination website	£10,000	£2,000	80	£170,000	budget to contribute to updates and material online
Mobile Display Unit	£25,000	£7,500	80	£625,000	rolling cost assumes £5000 annual cost for mileage, insurance etc. And £2500 for replacement/overhaul on 10 year basis
Comms campaigns post		£40,800	10	£408,000	£3400 per month to cover salary and support costs. Costed for 10 years as engagement and awareness raising measures should potentially be able to be stepped back once infrastructure changes established
Educational campaign material (NF code signs, leaflets etc)		£13,000	80	£1,040,000	£13000 per year, rolling cost
Marketing budget for social posts/film creation		£5,000	10	£50,000	rolling budget for 10 years to fit with campaign comms post
New camera/video equipment	£3,000			£3,000	1 off expenditure identified
Long term visitor monitoring - vehicle counts		£20,000	40	£800,000	Estimated cost for survey carried out by a consultancy, including analysis and reporting. Based on 15 counts through the year, repeated every 2 years for 80 years.
Long term visitor monitoring - visitor interviews		£40,000	11	£440,000	Estimated cost for survey carried out by a consultancy, including analysis and reporting. Based on 20 survey locations with 4 days spent at each. (e.g. 2 days in autumn and 2 days in spring) . Costed for repeat surveys every 3 years for 30 years – however interval could be extended to allow coverage over longer time window
Incident log of livestock worrying (dogs), petting		£1,000	20	£20,000	Rolling small budget to ensure data collected and maintained. May need more in early years to establish online recording system
Monitoring changes in impacts to vegetation at key recreation locations (including, but not limited to, car parks)		£25,000	5	£125,000	Assumption of survey fieldwork involving around 2 person days per location. Costs to cover 5 pulses in total, allowing repeat monitoring over extended period to determine change following implementation of spatial plan and other interventions.

Mitigation measure	One-off/Capital cost	Rolling cost	Multiplier for rolling cost	Total cost	Notes on how cost calculated
Monitoring changes to key features at key recreation locations (including, but not limited to, car parks).		£27,000	5	£135,000	Assumption of around 2 person days of monitoring time per location and 20 locations, with additional time for set up. Costs to cover 5 pulses in total, allowing repeat monitoring over extended period to determine change following implementation of spatial plan and other interventions.
Monitoring changes in breeding bird populations at key recreation locations (including, but not limited to, car parks).		£30,000	5	£150,000	Assumption of survey involving around 3 visits to 20 survey locations and a day per visit per location. Costs to cover 5 pulses in total, allowing repeat monitoring over extended period to determine change following implementation of spatial plan and other interventions.
Narrative of change		£5,000	5	£25,000	Desk-based study to bring ecological and visitor results together and provide narrative. Assumption of around 8 person days consultancy time
Total				**£21,628,060**	


New Forest Recreation 15 km Zone
New Forest Recreation 13.8 km buffer
National England Ramsar
Natural England SPA
Natural England SAC
Dorset Council boundary
POOLE to Cherbourg 5 hrs
POOLE to Guernsey 3 hrs Jersey 4 hrs St Malo 8 hrs
© Crown copyright [and database rights] 2025 OS AC0000830671. Use of this data is subject to terms and conditions. This map is not definitive and has no legal status.
New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar with 13.8km and 15km zones

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Appendix 4 Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	neutral

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	

Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Cabinet

9 December 2025

Amendment to Cabinet Decision for the Procurement of the Highways Term Service Contract (HTSC)

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director Highways & Engineering
Email: jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. The report requests an amendment to Cabinet's decision of 20 May 2025 as the previous decision could have the unintended effect of disapplying the Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council. The amendment is needed due to a drafting error in the original report.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 That the decision in minute 7 (c) of Cabinet of 20 May 2025 be replaced by the decision that: decisions to award contracts and works orders made under the HTSC up to the value of £500k, and the approval of associated terms and conditions be made by Officers in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

3.1 To not disapply the Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council.

4. The report

4.1 At its meeting on TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025 the Cabinet Member for Place presented a report seeking Cabinet's approval to commence the procurement of a new Dorset Council Highways Term Service Contract (HTSC) to be implemented from April 2027.

The decisions minuted were:

a) That the recommendations of Business Justification Case to secure a strategic partner for Dorset Council's Highways Services, be approved; to assist in delivering the service's capital works programme, contributing to the Council's corporate aim of growing Dorset economy, as well as the Place Plan aimed to protect the natural environment, climate and ecology.

(b) That the approval of the terms and conditions of the Highways Term Service (HTSC) Contract, and the decision to award the HTSC be delegated to the Executive Director for Place Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place

(c) That the decision to award contracts and works orders made under the HTSC up to the value of £500k, and the approval of associated terms and conditions be delegated to the Executive Director for Place following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services.

(d) That any decision to award a contract or works order under the HTSC over the value of £500k be made by the Executive Director for Place Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place and the Executive Director for Corporate Development (S151 Officer).

The decision as recorded under paragraph (c) means that **all** the decisions to award contracts and works orders under the value of £500k must be made by the Executive Director for Place following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services.

The effect of this decision is to unintentionally disapply the Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council, Appendix 2 Conditions and Limitations of Delegations, 2. Part 2 - Financial Powers Expenditure, which provides for Council Officers to approve and authorise expenditure up to £500k.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not amending the recommendation would mean that the Cabinet Member for Place would be required to agree all minor spend within the contract. As an example, this level of detail would require Member approval for individual potholes to be filled under the contract.

6. **Legal considerations**

6.1 None

7. **Financial implications**

7.1 None

8. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

8.1 None

8. **Well-being and health implications**

8.1 None

9. **Other implications**

9.1 None

10. **Risk implications**

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

11. **Equalities**

11.1 No identified impact

12. **Appendices**

12.1 None

13. **Background papers**

11.1 Minutes of the Cabinet meeting 20 May 2025

12 Report sign-off

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Cabinet

9 December 2025

Average Speed Cameras - A30 Sherborne dual carriageway

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):
Cllr R Legg
Cllr R Crabb

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title:
Tony Burden, Road Safety Manager
tony.burden@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1.1 This report presents the rationale for installing average speed enforcement cameras along the A30 Sherborne dual carriageway, in order to meet Dorset Council's statutory duty to implement measures that enhance road safety.

1.2 The introduction of average speed cameras is widely regarded as an effective measure to reduce speeding and lower collision rates, particularly on high-speed roads such as dual carriageways.

1.3 In addition to the concerns identified by our own Road Safety Team, HM Coroner has highlighted significant safety concerns on this route and cautioned that further fatalities are likely if these risks are not mitigated.

1.4 Although the initial installation costs are significant, average speed camera systems eliminate the need for regular mobile police enforcement and can monitor extended sections of road continuously. This makes them a cost-effective, long-term solution, particularly when compared to the considerable societal and economic costs associated with serious road traffic collisions. The implementation of this measure is therefore considered both necessary and proportionate.

2. Recommendation

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the allocation of Department for Transport funding for the installation of an Average Speed Camera system on the A30 Sherborne dual carriageway, supporting our commitment to creating safer and stronger communities.

3. Reason for the recommendation

3.1 Road safety is a statutory duty under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and a strategic priority for the Council. We are committed to the principles of the Safe System approach, which recognises the critical importance of speed management across the highway network.

3.2 Collision data indicates a high number of serious incidents along this stretch, with many vehicles recorded significantly exceeding the posted speed limit.

3.3 Evidence from multiple studies demonstrates that average speed camera systems are highly effective in reducing speeds and, consequently, collisions and casualties. Investment in such a system on the A30 is considered a proportionate and evidence-led intervention.

4. The report

4.1 Between 1 January 2014 and 24 March 2025, there have been 43 injury collisions on this stretch of road, resulting in 63 casualties, including 6 fatalities and 15 serious injuries.

4.2 In October 2024, the speed limit on the A30 Sherborne dual carriageway was reduced from 70mph to 60mph to enhance safety. Post-implementation speed surveys were carried out in July 2025. The data indicates a modest reduction in average speeds; however, a proportion of vehicles continue to exceed the new limit. The first two data tables present the percentage of vehicles within each speed range, while the third table shows the percentage of vehicles exceeding 68mph commonly recognised as the threshold for police enforcement within a 60mph limit.

Over Compton Junction

Speed range	Average vehicles per day	% of total traffic
Less than 50 mph	1379	10%
50 to 60 mph	6638	46%
60 to 70 mph	4923	34%
70 to 80 mph	887	6%
80 to 90 mph	150	1%
90 to 100 mph	22	<1%
100 to 110 mph	7	<1%
Over 110 mph	0	0%

West of Nether Compton Junction

Speed range	Average vehicles per day	% of total traffic
Less than 50 mph	1509	11%
50 to 60 mph	5380	39%
60 to 70 mph	5079	37%
70 to 80 mph	1293	9%
80 to 90 mph	294	2%
90 to 100 mph	60	<1%
100 to 110 mph	15	<1%
Over 110 mph	2	<1%

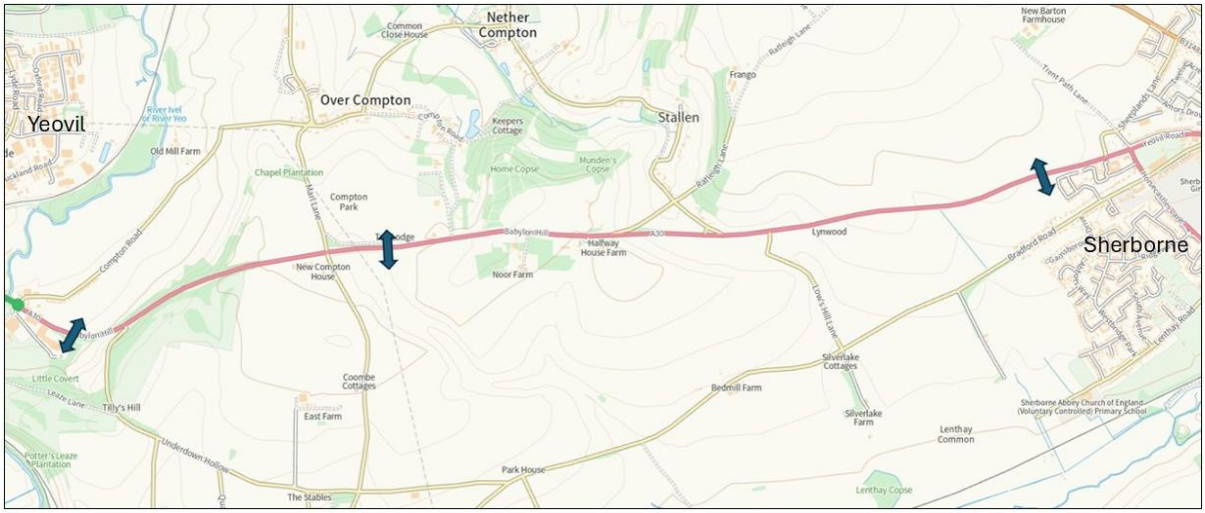
		NUMBER OF VEHICLES ABOVE ENFORCEMENT THRESHOLD (≥68MPH)							
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Average Daily
Site	Description	14-Jul	15-Jul	16-Jul	17-Jul	18-Jul	19-Jul	20-Jul	% ≥68mph
	Nether Compton								
3783	A30 W OF NETHER COMPTON JCT (EASTBOUND)	546	658	690	627	669	532	485	9.2%
3784	A30 W OF NETHER COMPTON JCT (WESTBOUND)	1559	1653	1689	1717	1732	1570	1651	22.8%
	Over Compton								
3755	A30 E OF OVER COMPTON JCT (WESTBOUND)	694	839	926	854	911	802	637	11.4%
3754	A30 W OF OVER COMPTON JCT (EASTBOUND)	806	796	723	580	682	612	552	9.3%
	Babylon Hill								
3779	BABYLON HILL, WEST OF MARL LANE (EASTBOUND)	187	216	215	160	211	195	179	2.7%
3780	BABYLON HILL, WEST OF MARL LANE (WESTBOUND)	592	736	857	785	865	705	504	10.2%
321	A30 WEST OF SHERBORNE (EASTBOUND)	777	1046	1150	989	1113	922	975	12.8%
321	A30 WEST OF SHERBORNE (WESTBOUND)	837	985	1106	1142	1181	979	865	13.1%

4.3 A recent 'Prevention of Future Deaths' report, issued by HM Coroner, raised ongoing concerns about the road layout at the Loscombe Cross junction. Although the speed limit has been reduced, the coroner highlighted the number of collisions in the area and warned that further fatalities could occur if safety issues are not addressed.

4.4 In response to the coroner's concerns, we have implemented physical changes at Loscombe Cross to restrict specific turning movements identified as high-risk. However, we do not believe these measures alone will sufficiently address the

broader collision risks along this stretch of road. Speeding on the A30 between Yeovil and Sherborne has regularly been highlighted as a significant issue by local representatives. Therefore, we are proposing the installation of average speed cameras to reduce speeding and enhance safety across the full length of the dual carriageway.

4.5 There will be three separate locations on both sides of the road for the cameras which are highlighted below:



5. Legal considerations

5.1 Under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, local authorities have a legal duty to take measures to improve road safety. Installing average speed cameras is a practical way to meet this obligation, especially in areas with persistent speeding issues.

5.2 The Government have recently confirmed that local authorities have full discretion to install speed cameras proactively. The Transport Minister clarified that councils are empowered to set their own criteria for installation and encouraged a preventative, evidence-led approach to road safety, particularly where local data and community support justify intervention.

5.3 A Traffic Regulation Order has been enacted to establish the 60mph speed limit, providing the necessary legal authority for Dorset Police to enforce using average speed camera technology.

5.4 In accordance with the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 and the Road Traffic Act 1988, all speed enforcement devices must be type-approved by the Home Secretary before their evidence can be used in legal proceedings. The equipment selected for this project has received the required approval.

5.5 Dorset Council will retain ownership of the average speed camera equipment, while Dorset Police will receive data from the cameras and will be responsible for the required enforcement.

6. Financial implications

6.1 A cost of approximately £1.1 million has been estimated for the scheme with the bulk of the costs associated with the supply and installation of the camera system together with the trenching for the electrical connections. This cost includes significant optimism bias and is expected to reduce as the design process moves into later phases.

6.2 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital budget provided by the Department for Transport will be used for this scheme.

6.3 The Department for Transport publishes an average 'value of prevention' per reported road collision, representing the estimated monetary benefit of avoiding a single collision, regardless of the number of casualties involved. This figure encompasses all associated costs, including casualties, property damage, emergency response, police and insurance administration, and related expenses.

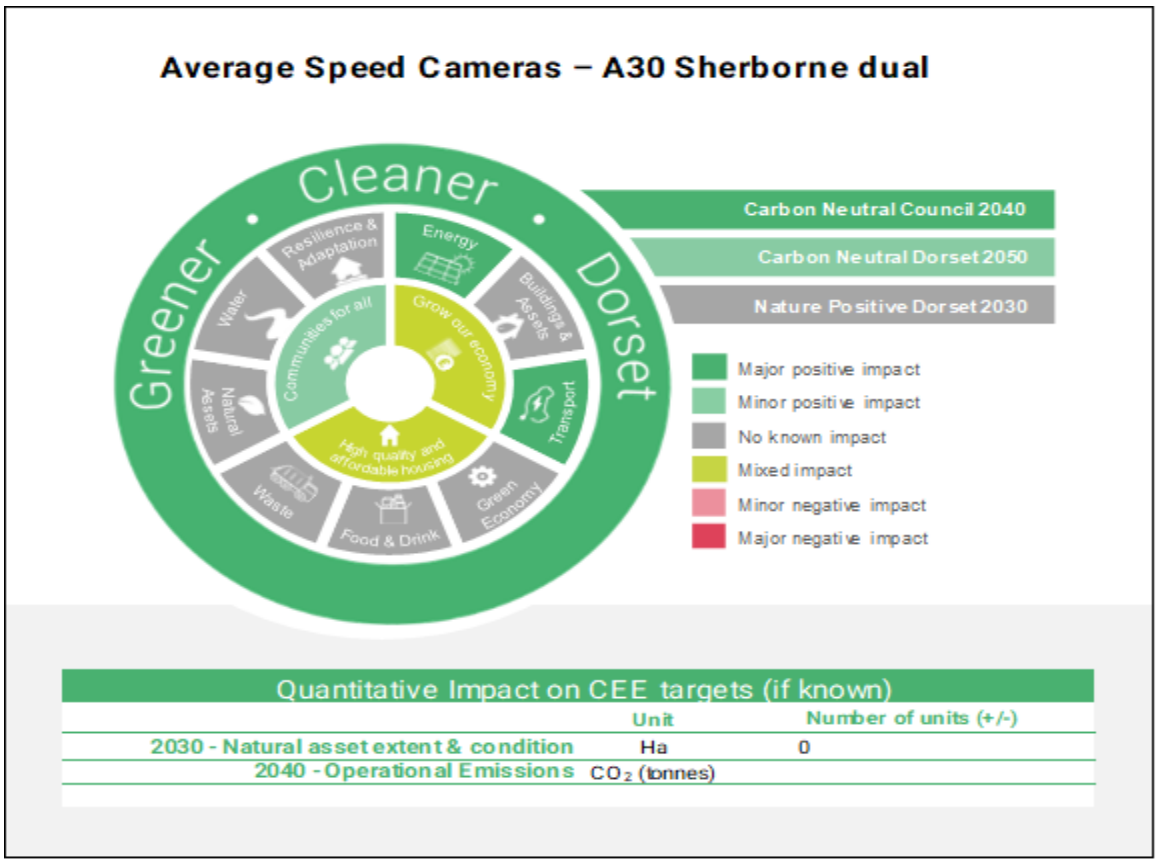
- For example, the current estimated value for preventing a fatal road traffic collision is £2,834,336, £324,895 for a serious injury collision and £32,502 for a slight injury collision. These values are integral to cost-benefit analyses for road safety interventions. If the cost of a proposed measure - such as the installation of average speed cameras - is lower than the anticipated savings from preventing collisions and casualties, the intervention is deemed economically justified.

- Based on this assessment, the collisions referenced in Section 4.1 are valued at the current Department for Transport rate, totalling approximately £18.33 million.

6.4 Fines issued through Fixed Penalty Notices are paid directly to HM Treasury and are not retained by Dorset Police. Similarly, fines imposed by the Magistrates' Courts are managed and collected centrally by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and are not received by the police.

6.5 Dorset Police may offer driver awareness courses as an alternative to a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution for eligible drivers. The fees collected for these courses are used to cover the operational costs of delivering the courses and contribute to local roads policing. Dorset Council and the Road Safety Partnership are currently assessing whether there is scope for these fees to also contribute towards Dorset Council's Road Safety programme.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



7.1 This scheme is considered to have a neutral impact on the natural environment, climate, and ecology. The Climate Wheel assessment did not identify any specific recommendations.

8. Well-being and health implications

8.1 This scheme is designed to reduce road traffic collision casualties on this route, thereby indirectly alleviating pressure on the NHS and wider healthcare services.

9. Other implications

9.1 Beyond easing pressure on the NHS and wider healthcare services, reducing road traffic collisions also supports economic productivity, lowers insurance and legal costs, and enhances social and community wellbeing.

10. Risk implications

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

- Current Risk: High
- Residual Risk: Medium

10.2 Choosing not to proceed with the installation of average speed cameras would limit our ability to achieve the desired road safety improvements along this corridor.

11. Equalities

11.1 None.

12. Appendices

12.1 None.

13. Background papers

13.1 None.

14. Report sign-off

14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (section 151 Officer) and the Portfolio Holder.

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Cabinet

9 December 2025

Closure of Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Nick Webster – Head of Growth and Regeneration
Email: nicholas.webster@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

1.1 Government has previously set out its expectation that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would receive no further government funding and has provided guidance as to how their remaining functions should be integrated into Local Authorities. Council officers from Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) have worked through the detail, implications and necessary actions to support integration of functions where possible from Dorset LEP (DLEP) and the closure of the DLEP.

1.2 This Cabinet report seeks approval for the acceptance of the £4,640,160.17 of funds from the DLEP for the purpose of achieving a benefit to the community in the Dorset Council area, in line with the aims and objectives of the DLEP. This transfer and amount is dependent on approval of the Dorset LEP 2024/25 accounts and the LEP Board approving the transfer of the residual funds to the two councils.

1.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy, as the Dorset Council representative on the DLEP Board, will formally resign from the DLEP (as will the BCP Council DLEP Board representative) on successful transfer of these funds to Dorset Council, and the DLEP will formally close.

2. Recommendations
It is recommended that:

(a) Cabinet resolves, in its capacity as a Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (CIC) company member, to ratify the decision to transfer and accept the following residual DLEP funds to Dorset Council.

i) £866,951.67 revenue

ii) £2,498,208.50 capital

iii) £1,275,000 capital loan repayments due

(b) Agrees that the Council, in its capacity as a DLEP (CIC) company member, and as Accountable Body for the DLEP, to transfer a sum of £4,640,160.18 to BCP Council as their share of the residual DLEP funds.

(c) Agrees that any further accrued interest on the DLEP funds, prior to their transfer, is split equally between Dorset Council and BCP Council.

(d) Agrees to ringfence funds for the benefit of the community and in accordance with the Objects of the DLEP.

(e) Agrees to maintain received funds in an appropriate reserve budget to be allocated subject to the council's financial regulations and in accordance with the received legal advice on compliance with the Community Interest Company Regulations 2025.

(f) Notes the resignation of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy from the DLEP Board and that officers will formally close the DLEP following successful transfer of the above funds and resignation of Board Members.

(g) Delegates authority to the Head of Legal Services to finalise any legal documentation required.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The acceptance of the revenue and capital funding for community benefits in the Dorset Council area will help deliver the Council Plan and Economic Growth Strategy and wider economic and social objectives.

4. Background

4.1 Dorset Council is a member of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP), which was set up as Community Interest Company (CIC) to advance economic development across Dorset. BCP Council is also a member. The remaining directors of the CIC are Councillor Millie Earl (Leader of BCP Council) and Councillor Simon Clifford (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Capital Strategy - Dorset Council).

4.2 The Council are the Accountable Body for the Dorset LEP and in this capacity holds the funds of the LEP, an arrangement which was managed by an SLA between Dorset Council and the Dorset LEP.

4.3 The government previously provided DLEP with funding for the purposes of delivering economic growth, job creation, and developing local economies, including support for small businesses, skills infrastructure.

4.4 Government made it clear that it would cease funding for the functions previously delivered by Local Enterprise Partnerships. Government also requested Local Authorities integrate LEP functions into business as usual but did not provide any additional funding to do this (other than for specific projects/programmes). It set out this guidance in August 2023 and then further guidance in December 2023.

4.5 In November 2023 the DLEP and both council's informed government of proposals to cease DLEP activities by end March 2025 and to use the period up to end March 2025 to transition any ongoing activity from the DLEP to the two local authorities.

4.6 The previous DLEP functions have now been incorporated within the local authorities or have ceased operation. Specifically, Dorset Growth Hub (now termed Business Growth Dorset), and Dorset Careers Hub employees were subject to TUPE into Dorset Council as government funding continued. Dorset Council are now the lead contractor for the Dorset Careers Hub and Business Growth Dorset and delivery of both services is undertaken across a pan Dorset geography.

4.7 At the point of informing government of the intent to cease DLEP activities there were approx. 15 DLEP Board directors. As of the date of this Cabinet Report most of the DLEP Board have resigned and the only directors of the CIC are the Leader of BCP Council Councillor Millie Earl and Councillor Simon Clifford, Dorset Council Portfolio Holder for Finance and Capital Strategy. This Cabinet report notes the formal resignation of Councillor Clifford from the DLEP Board once the remaining funds are transferred to Dorset Council and BCP Council and DLEP is closed down.

4.8 Government guidance on the allocation of any remaining LEP funds is clear that these should remain within the public sector. The DLEP Board expressed an expectation that any remaining DLEP funds should be used for economic development purposes.

4.9 To ensure the DLEP closure followed due process, Dorset Council sought external legal advice regarding the allocation of remaining funds. In line with the legal advice below, the transfer of the funds from the DLEP CIC can only be used for community uses in line with the aims and objectives of the DLEP CIC, in what is known as a "community interest test".

4.10 The DLEP Board are required to meet to formally agree the close down of the DLEP accounts and the Community Interest Company accounts, and to approve the transfer of the residual DLEP funds to the two local authorities having regard to the legal advice regarding the "community interest test".

4.11 Insurance will be purchased to cover former officers and Directors of the DLEP against any legacy claims relating to the operation and management of the DLEP under a management liability package. This will be in place for six years.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 An alternative option would be to not agree to transfer and accept the residual revenue and capital funding from the DLEP. This option has been discounted as receiving the residual funds will enable the Council to utilise them for the benefit for our residents and businesses.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 This report recommends the transfer of the DLEP's remaining assets to Dorset Council and to BCP Council. To ensure that the transfer of these assets complies with the Community Interest Company Regulations 2025 the Council has taken external legal advice, which is summarised in the paragraphs below.

6.2 The Community Interest Company Regulations 2025 ('The Regulations') imposes restrictions on the ability of Dorset LEP, as a CIC company, to transfer assets. The definition of assets includes the funds set out in the report. The Regulations state that the funds can only be transferred to another body with an asset lock or where that organisation is specifically named as a recipient in the Articles of Association. An asset lock is a legal requirement for a Community Interest Company (CIC) that prevents its assets, profits or surplus from being used for private gain.

6.3 Neither Dorset Council or BCP Council, are asset lock bodies, nor are they named as recipients in the DLEP Articles of Association or the Shareholders Agreement. However section 26(2) of the Regulations does permit the transfer of funds, where both Dorset Council and BCP Council can demonstrate that the transfer of the funds will be used for the benefit of the community and that transfer does not conflict with any other restrictions in the Articles. The Articles of Association of the DLEP in clause 3 refers to the Asset Lock and in the opinion of the external legal advice, supports the transfer of the funds based on community interest.

6.4 The directors of the Dorset LEP in approving the transfer of the funds, need to satisfy the 'Community Interest Test'. The Regulations do not specify what constitutes the community interest test, but the external legal advice states a transfer cannot be deemed for the benefit of the community where for example, the activities carried on are only for the benefit of the members of a particular body (for example for the benefit of the directors, employees or services providers) rather that for the benefit of the community.

6.5 The CIC Guidance and Information Pack published by the Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies[i] (the "Guidance") also states, that the benefit to the community must be continuing, therefore the external legal advice has suggested that there needs to be a continuing obligation, on Dorset Council and BCP Council, to use the funds in that agreed manner.

6.6 The risk is that there is a lack of definition of 'community interest' in the Regulations, however the external legal advice in conclusion states, that in their view under the Regulations, 'the LEP is able to instruct the Council to make the Proposed Transfer, provided the directors of LEP satisfy themselves that to do so would be for the

purposes of achieving a benefit to the community (consistent with the purposes for which the LEP was incorporated) and therefore in its best interest, while ensuring the transfer complies with any other restrictions the Articles may contain'.

6.7 The Articles of Association for the DLEP CIC state that the Objects of the CIC are to: "*carry on activities which benefit the community and in particular (without limitation) to drive economic and employment growth in Dorset, through the support of a strongly performing, productive and sustainable economy, characterised by a greater incidence of higher paid and skilled jobs, in a manner that, in so far as possible, harnesses and protects Dorset's unique environmental assets*."

6.8 As a consequence of the Regulation interpretation outlined above in paragraph 6.6, it is considered that any activity Dorset Council or BCP Council undertake utilising residual DLEP funds would need to comply with the Objects of the DLEP CIC as set out in paragraph 6.7.

6.9 Where a transfer of the funds is not conducted for community benefit purposes the Regulator may initiate civil proceeding on behalf of the CIC company, wind up the company, remove and appoint directors, freeze company assets, carry out investigations similar to the Secretary of State under the Companies Act 2006, undertake a derivative action on behalf of the company against the directors where a criminal offence is discovered, directors of the CIC may also be in breach of their duties under the Company Act 2006.

6.10 Based on the external legal advice, it is considered that any successful challenge by the Regulator is a low risk.

6.11 Provided the Directors follow the external legal advice for the transfer of funds it is considered unlikely there will be a successful claim for personal liability against a director as outlined in 6.9 of this report. The Council's insurance manager is liaising with BCP Council officers in relation to Directors and Officers cover and respective insurance brokers to provide appropriate insurance cover against personal liability claims.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The total funds remaining within the DLEP account amounts to £7,061,939.27 as of the date of this report, and a further £2,550,000 remains as an outstanding loan repayment. In addition, Dorset Council holds a DLEP revenue reserve of £55,218.00 to cover costs, which will be included in the amount to share equally between Dorset Council and BCP Council.

7.2 An amount of £386,836.92 was committed by the DLEP Board at its last Board meeting on 27th March 2025 to fund some legacy activity, and cover some ongoing operational and management liabilities, for example a proportion of redundancy payments to staff TUPE'd into Dorset Council.

7.3 Consequently at total of £9,280,320.35 remains to be transferred to Dorset Council and BCP Council on an equal percentage basis, fifty percent of the residual funds each. Dorset Council will receive £4,640,160.17 in transferred DLP funds.

7.4 Dorset Council will immediately receive £3,365,160.17 consisting of £866,951.67 of revenue funding and £2,498,208.50 of capital funding.

7.5 DLEP were responsible for the dissemination of a variety of government funding, one fund – Growing Places Fund – was administered as a series of loans to businesses and public bodies. As of the date of this report there is still one outstanding loan which will continue to be administered by Dorset Council until it is repaid in full in January 2027.

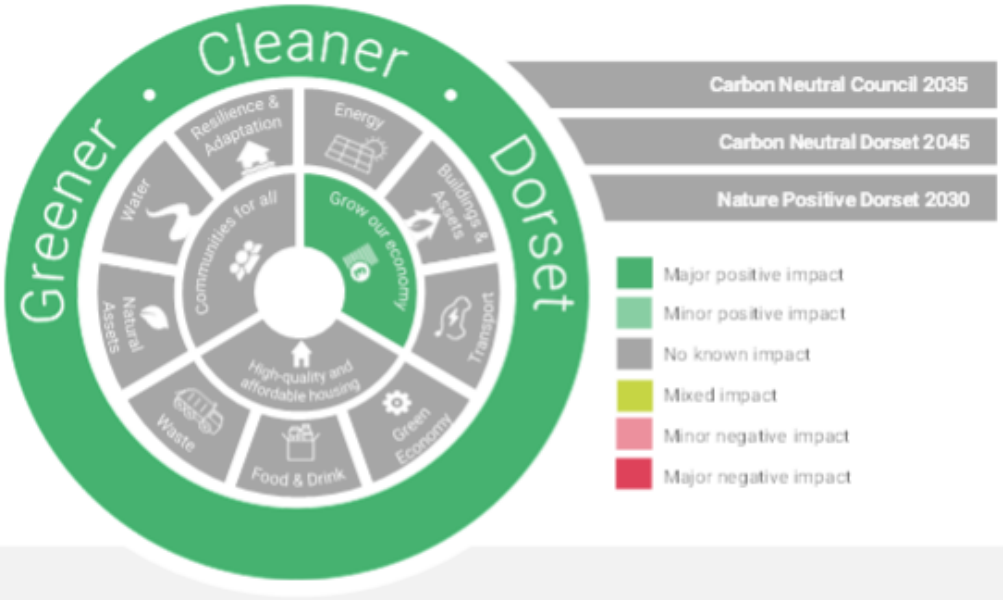
7.6 The repayments will be split evenly between Dorset Council and BCP Council on receipt and in total the council will receive £1,275,000 of capital funds, this is in addition to the amount specified in paragraph 7.4 above. The Council will charge £1k in total for the administration of the loan which will be documented in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with BCP Council.

7.7 As set out in the Legal implications above, the funds transferred from the DLEP to Dorset Council and BCP Council must be spent on activity 'consistent with the purposes for which the LEP was incorporated' in order to comply with the CIC asset transfer legislation.

7.8 A ringfenced reserve can be set up in order to accommodate the funds until the appropriate expenditure scheme is identified.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 Climate Change Wheel



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2035 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown
2045 - County Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown

There are no recommendations resulting from this Climate Change Wheel.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Economic development projects have the potential to have a significant positive impact on the health and well-being of Dorset residents through the encouragement of new and better paid jobs, improvements in skills provision and facilities, or the advancement of infrastructure of other projects leading to private sector investment.

9.2 Economic Development projects could include seeking to address exclusion from the labour market - including those with health conditions and/or caring responsibilities or lower skill levels, young people (and NEETs) without essential skills and people trapped in insecure and poor-quality jobs.

9.3 Data from the Health Foundation, which is an independent charitable organisation working to build a healthier UK, shows that unemployed individuals are nearly six times more likely to report poor health than employees, with only 29% of unemployed people reporting their health as either very good or excellent.

10. Other implications

10.1 N/A

11. **Risk implications**

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

There is a lack of definition of 'community interest' in the Regulations, however the External Legal advice in conclusion states, that in their view under the Regulations the LEP is able to instruct the Council to make the Proposed Transfer, provided the directors of LEP satisfy themselves that to do so would be for the purposes of achieving a benefit to the community (consistent with the purposes for which the LEP was incorporated) and therefore in its best interest, while ensuring the transfer complies with any other restrictions the Articles may contain.

Based on the external Legal Advice, Legal considers, provided, all the other requirements of the Regulations are observed, any successful challenge by the Regulator is low risk. The Council's insurance manager is arranging appropriate Directors and Officers insurance cover to mitigate against this residual risk.

12. **Equalities**

12.1 This decision does not impact on any protected characteristics and relates to financial and governance decisions regarding the closure of the DLEP. There are no staff remaining in the DLEP. Consequently this decision does not require an equalities impact assessment. If the Council chooses to use the received funding from the DLEP an equalities impact assessment might be required at the time any decision is made regarding the allocation of funds.

13. **Appendices**

13.1 N/A

14. **Background papers**

14.1 Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership Articles of Association - Articles of Association

7 Report sign-off

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Cabinet

9 December 2025

Future Leisure Management

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr R Hope, Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Local Councillor(s):
All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Paul Rutter - Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services
Email: paul.rutter@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Part Exempt Para 3

1. Executive summary

1.1 The Council currently has a mixture of management models across its leisure centres which include in-house management, centres managed by third party operators under a contract and centres leased to operators to manage as a concession. The leisure contracts at Ferndown Leisure Centre, Blandford Leisure Centre and Dorchester Sports Centre expire on 31 March 2026.

1.2 The Council has recently carried out a detailed appraisal of the options for future leisure management as part of the wider leisure facilities strategy work. The purpose being to decide which of the following standard delivery models is best able to meet the Council priorities, financial objectives and service delivery requirements.

1.3 The option to go out to the open market to procure a contract with a single operating partner could enable a significant annual revenue reduction. A contracted leisure service with a single operator is also considered most likely to deliver key service and performance outcomes.

1.4 The Council needs two years to develop and agree a procurement strategy and undertake the complex procurement exercise necessary to procure and transition to a single operator. To maintain service provision during this period; existing leisure contracts need to be extended by applying PCR15 Reg 72 – Modification of Contracts. These modifications have been approved by Procurement and

Legal Services. It is advised that the option of an additional year is agreed to provide time contingency. The detailed procurement strategy referred to will be brought back to Cabinet in September 2026 for consideration and approval.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet

2.1 Agrees to the procurement of a single leisure contract operator and to re-commission Max Associates to develop the Dorset Leisure Centres Procurement Strategy required to achieve this.

2.2 Agrees that the Dorset Leisure Centres Procurement Strategy be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and final approval of the strategy's recommendations in September 2026.

2.3 Agrees that the Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services is authorised to agree contract extensions for Ferndown Leisure Centre, Blandford Leisure Centre and Dorchester Sports Centre for a further 2 years from the 1 April 2026 with an option for a further 1 year.

3.0 Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 Following a review of leisure centre management options, procuring a leisure contractor to operate all the Council's in-scope leisure centres is best able to meet the Council priorities, financial objectives and service delivery requirements.

3.2 Following a procurement strategy will enable the Council to consider and set out the timetable, the best way to approach and manage the market tendering process, the specification of services for each of the centres in scope, the length and type of contract, the Council's position on risk and to control and manage the delivery of any investment programmes.

3.3 The extension of the existing leisure contracts will enable the leisure centres to remain open and operational during the development of the procurement strategy, the procurement process and the mobilisation to a single leisure operator.

4.0 Management Options

4.1 The Council fully recognises the significant role which its leisure offer plays in preventative health, both in terms of physical and mental wellbeing, and the potentially positive impact this has in reducing the call on many of its statutory services.

4.2 The Council is currently developing a new Leisure Facilities Strategy and is undertaking a robust quantitative and qualitative review to help inform the future direction of a sustainable leisure service.

4.3 In developing its wider strategy, the Council has an aspiration and need to consider its built facility planning particularly given its ageing stock of leisure facilities; different management arrangements, future growth needs and changing economic and the demographic profile of the area.

4.4 The Council currently has a mixture of management models across its leisure centres including in-house management, centres managed by third party operators under a contract and centres leased to operators to operate as a concession. The leisure contracts at Ferndown Leisure Centre, Blandford Leisure Centre and Dorchester Sports Centre expire on 31 March 2026.

4.5 The Council have undertaken a detailed appraisal of future leisure management options to determine which of the following delivery models is best able to meet the Council priorities, financial objectives and service delivery requirements. The appraisal has focussed on the facilities being operated as they are now with no investment as well as considering the potential impact through investment. The opportunities for facility improvements will be considered within the wider strategy work, although it is noted that a single contracted leisure service is the best option in both scenarios.

4.6 The figures in Appendix 2 highlight the current trading position across sites and estimate the future revenue impact if the centres were managed through an external contractor, a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) or directly ‘in house’. These figures include maintenance costs as identified in the building condition survey reports.

4.7 The option to go out to the market ‘as is’ and procure a single operating partner could enable a significant annual revenue reduction. This detail is set out in Appendix 2.

4.8 The appraisal has also considered other factors, for example, the direct influence and control the Council will have over the services and how risky and sustainable future models may be. The evaluation matrix in Appendix 2 also identified a service contract with a single leisure operator as the most suitable option.

4.9 Leisure Procurement Strategy

4.10 The procurement of an external contractor is estimated to take 18 months. In advance of this, the Council should formulate a procurement strategy which will inform the contract brief and the process. The strategy should include the centres in scope, consideration of community asset transfer options, the length and type of contract and any investment programmes.

4.11 For the leisure centres that are currently managed in house and in scope, existing staff would transfer to a new operator under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE).

4.12 Although Bridport Leisure Centre receives financial support from Dorset Council, the Council does not own the centre or the land it occupies. Redlands Community Sports Hub is successfully operated by Active Dorset and has 27 years remaining on their lease. It is proposed that these sites would be excluded from any procurement process.

4.13 Max Associates would be re-commissioned to develop a procurement strategy, once the wider leisure facilities report has been reviewed by Place and Resource Overview in February 2026 and Cabinet in March 2026. This report will consider any investment opportunities which could include potential new build options and will help to inform the procurement brief and process to go to the market. This report is estimated to cost £5,000 and will be funded through the leisure revenue budget.

4.14 **Contract extensions**

4.15 It is recommended that the existing three leisure contracts are extended under PCR15 Reg 72 – Modification of Contracts by two years (with the option of an additional year). This allows for the development of the procurement strategy, the running of a procurement process and the mobilisation of the successful contractor. The additional year gives protection to the Council and provides time contingency were a contractor not to be appointed before the two years expires. The scope to apply these modifications has been reviewed and approved by delegated Procurement and Legal Services Officers.

5 Alternative options considered

5.1 The appraisal also considered the option of managing leisure centres directly through in-house management as well as setting up a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC). Both options would require a higher level of financial subsidy and are considered less likely to deliver key service and performance outcomes.

6 Legal considerations

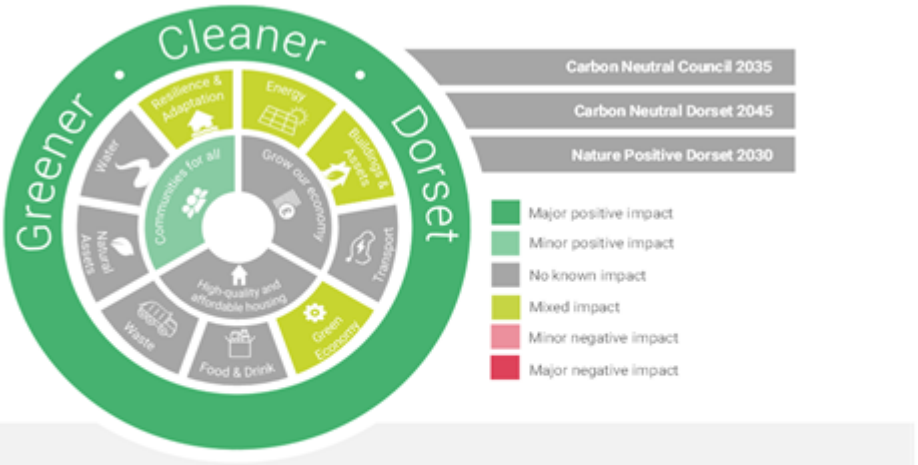
6.1 Legal advice confirms that it would be lawful to extend the contract further in line with PCR15 Reg 72(1)(b) on the grounds that a change at this point of the contract cannot be made for economic reasons and would cause significant inconvenience and substantial duplication of cost for the Council. Further the value of the extension does not exceed 50% of the original contracts value.

6.2 Alternatively, under PCR15 Reg 72(e), the modification would not be considered substantial in terms of duration and value within the meaning of paragraph (8).

7. Financial implications

7.1 The option to go out to the market ‘as is’ and procure a single operating partner could enable a significant annual revenue reduction. The details of which are set out in Appendix 2. Whilst there is clear evidence to support the ‘contracted out’ option as being the lowest cost to the Council, the leisure market can be very volatile, so actual savings will not be known until a procurement exercise has taken place.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2035 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown
2045 - County Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown

8.1 The recommendation sees no changes to the existing services at this time. As such, most areas have no known impact, though there may be potential future mixed impacts with regard to energy, buildings & assets, green economy, and resilience & adaptation. The procurement strategy will consider future facility investment opportunities, which could include examples of retrofit to buildings to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. Future implications will be assessed in greater detail as part of the procurement strategy.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Increasing participation in sport and physical activity and reducing levels of inactivity are key to both local and national Government achieving outcomes in public health (physical and mental), adult social care and education.

This is further reflected in the Council Plan, where a key priority is to help create strong, healthy communities. The Council’s aims are to support communities to be active, to increase people’s healthy life expectancy and

reduce differences between areas. Leisure facilities will play a significant role in providing opportunities for all ages to lead a more physically active lifestyle.

10. **Other implications**

10.1 None

11. **Risk implications**

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

12. **Equalities**

12.1 On extension, the provisions of the leisure contracts will not change, and the service provision will remain the same. The equality impact assessment identifies the need to monitor future legislative changes of the use of changing rooms.

13. **Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Commercial Information - Exempt

14. **Background papers**

14.1 Max Associates Management Options Report

15 **Report sign-off**

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer) the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1 Leisure Contracts

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the Dorset Council style guide and also use the accessibility checker to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council website

Before completing this form, please refer to the supporting guidance. The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the Diversity & Inclusion Officer.

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Extension of the outsourced leisure centre contracts

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Other – Extension of a contract

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

External

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

Leisure Services are currently developing a new leisure strategy for Dorset. As part of the built facilities element of the strategy and as the current contracts for those outsourced leisure centres run out in March 2026 it is necessary to extend those contracts, with no changes to them, for a further two years plus one. This will allow the leisure strategy to be agreed and adopted and for the relevant time to procure a single new contract for our leisure centres in Dorset

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

Dorset Council has an interest in 8 leisure centres across Dorset, those being in Weymouth(2), Blandford, Bridport, Verwood, Dorchester, Ferndown and Purbeck. These were inherited under Local Government Reorganisation in 2019. The centres in Blandford, Dorchester and Ferndown are outsourced and run by contractors on behalf of Dorset Council, those being Everyone Active, Freedom Leisure and Places Leisure respectively. Currently all operational management contracts are due to run out on 31st March 2026

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

Data has been gathered through procurement and finance colleagues

Throughout the contracts DC has received no physical complaints on how the leisure centres are run operationally throughout Dorset and it is credit to those operators on how they have improved month on month numbers through the doors whether that is in the learn to swim programmes or the over 50's sessions and GP Referral classes

Current provision?

7. What did this tell you?

The evidence gathered told us of the need to extend the contracts, as failure to do this could mean the current contractors walking away from the centres, handing the keys back to Dorset Council, leaving no leisure provision in those parts of the county.

Evidence told us as mentioned above on the success stories of more of our communities using our leisure centres for their health and wellbeing

All facility operators manage situations on a case-by-case basis, acting with sensitivity and understanding to continue to ensure all customers are treated with dignity and respect, and are supported while policies are under review. The EHRC states that employers and other duty-bearers must follow the law and should take appropriate specialist legal advice where necessary. Please refer to the interim update provided by the EHRC for further information (Leisure Network April 2025) This is paramount in the upcoming report on use of changing rooms and toilets for all genders within the leisure industry

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

We have engaged with the current contractors of the leisure centres, finance and procurement colleagues as well as the portfolio holder for leisure and culture and Executive Director for Place

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqIA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqIA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require a EqIA because (provide details):Yes

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.

- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different protected characteristics.

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Disability	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Religion and belief	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Rural isolation	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county
Single parents	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Armed forces communities	Neutral	Continuation of Leisure provision in the county

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

The main impact on the continuation of the contracts over the 2 year period will be to make sure that the operators at the sites adhere to the advice by UK Active, Sport England and CIMSPA mainly in the regard the use of changing facilities within our leisure centres but all new rulings that may take place throughout the contract period

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Use of changing facilities	Each contract will adhere to the guidance given by UK Active and Sport England	Darren Spreadbury	Jan 2026 and onwards
Monitoring	Continuation of monitoring the contract by DC on a monthly and quarterly basis through KPI's and Stakeholder groups	Darren Spreadbury	Monthly/Quarterly till 2028
All comments and complaints	The contract operator will deal with all complaints and comments and feedback through the stakeholder groups	Operator/Darren Spreadbury	Quarterly until 2028

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Darren Spreadbury

Officers involved in completing the EqIA:Darren Spreadbury

Date of completio18/11/2026

Version Number: 2

EqIA review date: 18/11/2026

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

Next Steps: As per the contract it will be monitored quarterly and through monthly KPI’s

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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