

Dorset Council Cabinet meeting 1st November 2022

Statement from Dorset Wildlife Trust

Wild Woodbury Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

Dorset Wildlife Trust is extremely grateful for the funding from both BCP and Dorset Councils, through Poole Harbour nutrient mitigation payments, that funded the acquisition of 150 hectares of land at Court Farm Bere Regis, now referred to as Wild Woodbury. We have already in a year seen the results of changed land management that has allowed nature recovery on the site to start. We have also established monitoring programmes that will demonstrate over time the impact of change on soil and water quality.

As well as the benefits for wildlife, water, soils and climate on the site, we aim to develop strong connections with the community and to provide open access to those parts of the site closest to Bere Regis. Designation of 12.5 hectares of the land as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, alongside the capital and long term funding being discussed today, will enable that.

In developing this programme, we have consulted extensively with the community, including attending a village meeting, where there was overwhelming support for the project, consultation on the name of the site, regular liaison with the Parish Council, involvement of Bere Regis school, drop-in days attended by 130 residents and an online consultation. These have all informed the SANG delivery plan which we have worked up with Dorset Council and Natural England, and we are therefore confident that it will have a high level of local support.

As part of the plan, accessibility to the site will be hugely improved from a baseline of the current rights of way, and access for people with limited mobilities will be enabled as far as practicable. The funding will enable creation of dedicated car parking, though many visitors will be expected to come from the village as well. At the entrance to the site pedestrian and vehicular traffic will be separated through the reinstatement of a previous pedestrian route. Whilst encouraging healthy lifestyles and good mental and physical health through time spent in nature, we also hope to be able to offer more formal green prescribing at the site in conjunction with health services.

Dorset Wildlife Trust has for many years helped inform and strongly support the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework. As owners and managers of several heathland sites which are impacted by recreational access, including Upton and Winfrith Heaths, we fully understand and support the need for SANGs and their aims to attract people away from internationally important heathland reserves where recreational pressures are harmful to protected habitats and species. At Wild Woodbury the



Dorset
Wildlife Trust

Dorset Wildlife Trust
Brooklands Farm
Forston, Dorchester
Dorset, DT2 7AA

Tel: 01305 264620
enquiries@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk
dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk

SANG plans are entirely complementary to and will be delivered in tandem with wildlife recovery plans that are funded from separate sources.

We will continue to encourage visitors to support local businesses including the pubs and shop in the village, whilst developing plans for future use of the redundant farm buildings. These are at their early stages but which will be designed to complement public and community use of the site and SANG area.

Finally, and for the avoidance of doubt, plans have been worked up on the basis that the funding amount is exclusive of VAT, should VAT be found to be chargeable.

Thank you for listening

Imogen Davenport
Conservation Director – Nature-based Solutions
Dorset Wildlife Trust
idavenport@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk