

# Cabinet

9 July 2024

## Brit Valley Natural Flood Management Project

### For Decision

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio:**

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council

**Local Councillor(s):**

Cllr Bridget Bolwell

Cllr David Bolwell

Cllr Sarah Williams

Cllr Simon Christopher

Cllr Neil Eysenck

Cllr Craig Monks

**Executive Director:**

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

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

**Brief Summary:**

An offer for Phase 1 funding has been made by the Environment Agency to the Dorset National Landscape team to deliver a project in the Brit Catchment (covering all or part of Bridport, Eggardon, Beaminster and Marshwood Vale wards). Dorset National Landscape Partnership, hosted by Dorset Council, is asking Cabinet to accept this offer and approve securing Phase 2; allowing the Executive Lead for Place to sign the agreement under the scheme of delegation.

The project aim is to reduce flood risk to properties and flood defence maintenance costs in the area by 'natural' interventions higher in the catchment slowing the flow of water. A parallel monitoring programme will also evidence effectiveness. Activity timeline starts with installation of monitoring equipment

(c£240k) by September 2024 to unlock second stage funding of c£433k to deliver a series of leaky dams, floodplain reconnection and land use changes by March 2027.

This project requires no Dorset Council funding; it is fully costed to deliver with the majority of funds (Phase 1 £235k; Phase 2 £389k) directly from the Environment Agency. The modest proportion of match will be provided by the partnership's staff time (Phase 1) and landowner maintenance of flood management interventions (Phase 2). The budget includes income to cover input by Dorset Council's Flood Risk Management Team.

**Recommendation:**

Cabinet approves the project and enables the Executive Lead for Place to enter into the funding agreement for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 via the scheme of delegation.

**Reason for Recommendation:**

Funding has been secured externally and the project delivery will make a positive impact on the residents of Dorset.

This contributes towards Dorset Council's Plan 2022-24 priorities of 'protection of our natural environment, climate and ecology' and 'stronger, healthier communities'.

**1. Report**

**1.1 Project background**

1.2 The risk of flooding in the wider Brit Catchment is significant. Dorset Council's Flood Risk Management Team have recorded 177 flooding incidences in the catchment between 1994 and 2023. There are also 816 properties at risk from surface water flooding.

1.3 Over the past two years, Dorset National Landscape team has been working with the Environment Agency, an independent geomorphologist, and Dorset Wildlife Trust, to identify high-risk fields where runoff could cause problems and where sediment is being eroded. Dorset National Landscape team have also been working with landowners to identify opportunities to work with nature to overcome these issues. The aim is to reduce local flooding issues and stop sediment entering the rivers and ending up behind the flood defences in Bridport. This funding provides the opportunity to deliver on this research and engagement.

1.4 Dorset Council's Flood Risk Management Team along with Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and Environment Agency are also interested in

the risk posed by flooding and have been working on rural runoff projects over the past three years, which aim to tackle flooding in high-risk communities. This project aligns with this work.

1.5 In late 2023, The Natural Flood Management Programme called for Expressions of Interest (EOI). The Natural Flood Management programme is a Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs project, administered through the Environment Agency.

1.6 Dorset National Landscape team submitted an EOI and were one of 40 successful projects that have been invited to work up projects to be delivered between September 2024 and March 2027.

### 1.7 **Project aims and activity**

1.8 The project aims to install 32 Natural Flood Management measures throughout the catchment at locations identified as being of most benefit. These measures are:

- Four hectares of land use change that will support storage of excess rainfall in the field. This includes reversion of arable and intensively managed grassland to semi-natural grassland and wetlands.
- One hectare of in-field flood storage, through the creation of small bunds that will hold back water on high-risk overland flow routes.
- 12km of leaky dams to slow the flow of water through the catchment, trapping sediment along the way.
- Five hectares of floodplain reconnection, lowering riverbanks to allow more water onto the floodplain, and stored in wetland areas, scrapes, and ponds. This increases storage capacity of flood waters in time of need.

1.9 A significant part of the project is the monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures through the installation of flow measuring stations. A specialist contractor will be procured to deliver this element of the project.

### 1.10 **Partners**

1.11 The project is a partnership between

- Dorset National Landscape partnership, which is hosted by Dorset Council: project management

- Dorset Wildlife Trust: landowner liaison and delivery on the ground
- West Dorset Wilding: volunteer management and links to Brit Catchment Recovery Scheme

## 1.12 **Funding**

1.13 The total value of delivering the flood management measures is £280,000. £215,000 has been allocated to detailed monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures. Staff time to design, secure permissions, and oversee delivery, as well as enable wider community engagement, is £117,000. With a 10% contingency, the overall budget of the project is £673,000.

1.14 The grant request to the Environment Agency will be for 93% of costs. Additional match funding will come from partner time, already secured additional funding via Farming in Protected Landscapes, and farmer time for future management. There is no cash requirement from Dorset Council.

1.15 Funding can be claimed from the Environment Agency three months in advance and three months in arrears.

1.16 As Dorset Council is a Risk Management Authority, the funding is disbursed under section 16 of the Flood and Water Act Management Act 2010, and the associated Memorandum relating to capital grants for other risk management authorities in England (2020). This is a route already used by the Council, and particularly the Coastal Risk Management team.

1.17 Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board formally supported the Dorset National Landscape team to develop and deliver the Brit Catchment Natural Flood Management project at their 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 meeting.

## 1.18 **Next steps**

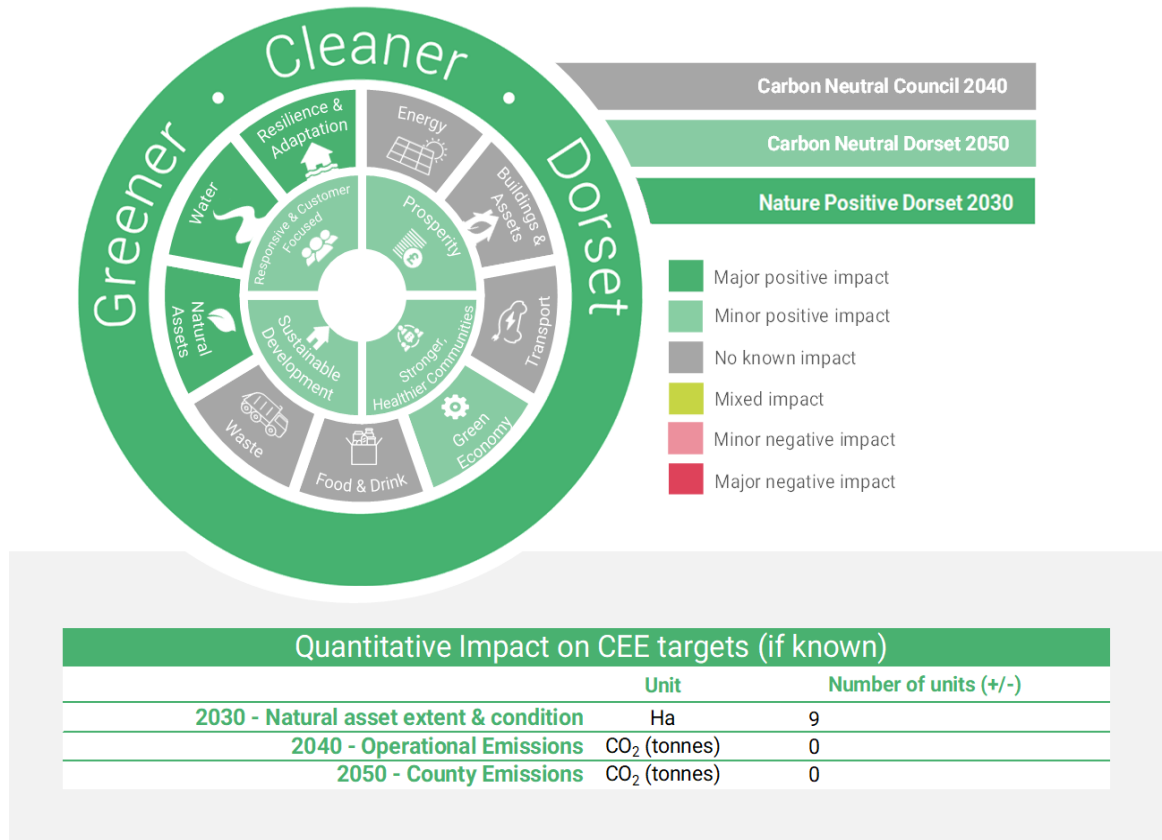
1.19 Dorset National Landscape team have secured an offer from the Environment Agency to fund the Phase 1 to September 2024.

1.20 Dorset National Landscape team will submit a full business case in August 2024 to secure the release of further funds to enable delivery of Phase 2 to 2027.

## 2. **Financial Implications**

No Dorset Council funds are required to deliver the project. The grant provides income to the Dorset National Landscape team and Flood Risk Management team for their input into delivery.

### 3. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications



### 4. Well-being and Health Implications

4.1 As a result of the project flood risk will be reduced, benefiting the health and wellbeing of those currently at risk from flooding.

### 5. Other Implications

5.1 None for Dorset Council but this project will work closely with the Brit Catchment Recovery Project, which is looking to secure agri-environment investment in the Brit Catchment, including further flood risk management projects, over the next 20 years.

### 6. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: Low  
Residual Risk: Low

## 7. Equalities Impact Assessment

7.1 A screening assessment for an Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken, showing that a full EqIA was not required. The following actions have been identified:

- Further work will be done over the life of the project to better understand how the natural flood management measures have reduced flood risk for those who are most vulnerable.

## 8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: extracts from the natural environment, climate & ecological wheel.

**ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS**

<b>Natural Environment, Climate &amp; Ecology Strategy Commitments</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	minor positive impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	Major positive impact
Water	Major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	Major positive impact

<b>Corporate Plan Aims</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Prosperity	minor positive impact
Stronger healthier communities	minor positive impact
Sustainable Development & Housing	minor positive impact
Responsive & Customer Focused	minor positive impact

**TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Responses - will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?</b>
<b>Energy</b>	

Consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	These sites are not identified as strategic evidence for wind energy within the Local Plan evidence base. Dorset National Landscape team are not aware of strategic spatial evidence on solar opportunities, but the opportunity cost for ground mounted solar may reasonably be considered small given (a) the small 9ha extent, especially once factoring in that this project aims mitigate the flood risk across a much wider land area; (b) even restricting attention to the specific sites, the proposed land use serves wider sustainability objectives on climate adaptation, emissions mitigation and nature recovery.
<b>Buildings &amp; Assets</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Transport</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Green Economy</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Food &amp; Drink</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Waste</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Natural Assets &amp; Ecology</b>	
Use the opportunity to connect existing habitats using wildlife corridors	The project indirectly does this through management of riparian woodland and grassland, and is working with Brit Catchment Recovery, which will be doing this over the next 20 years.
<b>Water</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Resilience &amp; Adaptation</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA

**9. Background Papers**

9.1 None

**10. Report Sign Off**

10.1 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)