

# Cabinet

9 July 2024

## Nature Buddies Network Dorset

### For Decision

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio:**

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council

**Local Councillor(s):**

Cllr

**Executive Director:**

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

**Report Author:**

Job Title: Stepping into Nature Project Coordinator

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

**Brief Summary:**

With support from the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board, the Dorset National Landscape team has secured an offer of £248,811 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to create a Nature Buddies Network across Dorset and is seeking permission to accept the grant offer. Delivery will be led by Dorset National Landscape Partnership.

The project will support a more diverse range of people to engage with their local heritage to help heritage thrive, be more resilient, valued and cared for now and into the future. To achieve this ambition, Dorset National Landscape officers will drive forward, support and coordinate the growth of a network of trained volunteer Nature Buddies embedded into existing heritage and health organisations. These buddies will provide personalised support to overcome barriers faced to engaging with heritage. Digital access improvements and content creation will see heritage opportunities brought to any setting for varying interests and abilities. Community grants will support capital access

improvements, increasing the provision of local, relevant and enjoyable spaces for all to enjoy.

Nature Buddies, along with the digital and capital access improvements, will be a long-lasting legacy built into the ecosystem of support for people accessing heritage. Heritage will become valued in people's lives and people's wellbeing in Dorset will improve.

**Recommendation:**

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

**Reason for Recommendation:**

Funding has been secured externally and the project deliverables will make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Dorset residents and the heritage of Dorset.

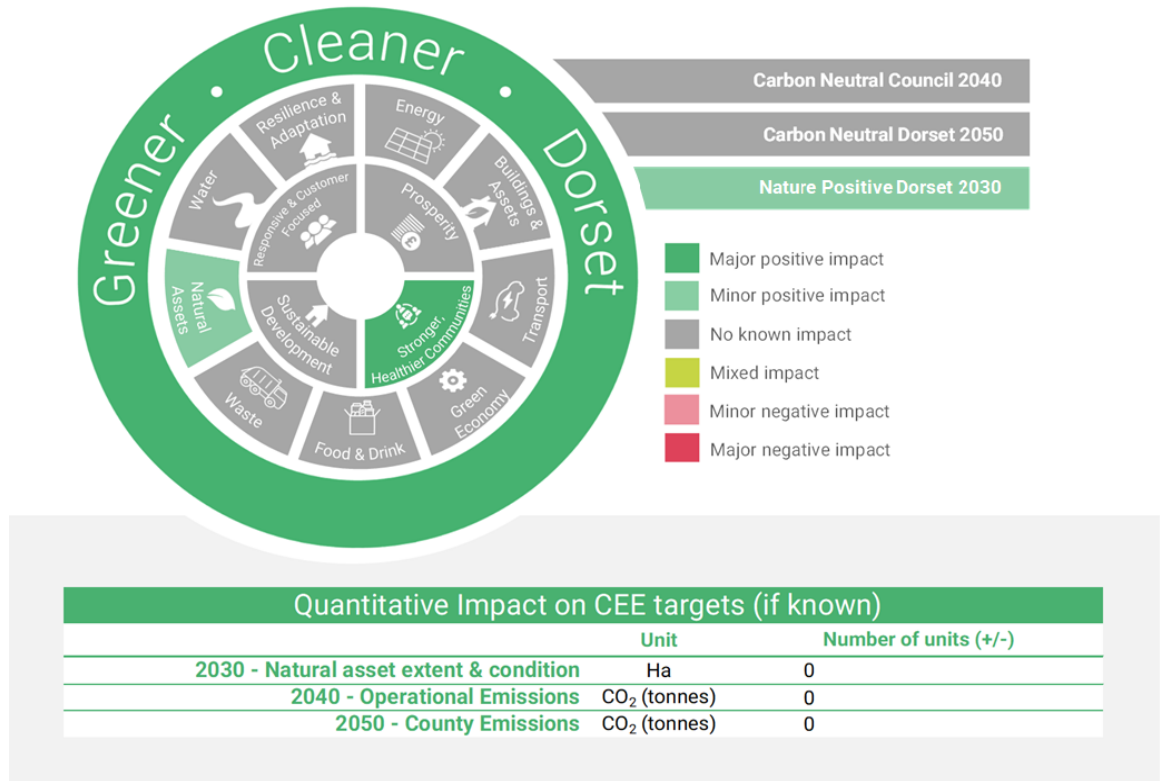
This contributes towards Dorset Council's Plan 2022-24 priorities of 'stronger, healthier communities' and 'protection of our natural environment, climate and ecology'.

**1. Financial Implications**

There will be no financial implications to Dorset Council as funding has been secured externally.

The funding offer is £248,811 (68%). The full project costs are budgeted at £382,454. Match funds are confirmed from the Dorset National Landscape Partnership of £25,000 and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund of £52,343. There is a funding shortfall of £56,300 due to an unsuccessful parallel bid; the project team will address this by seeking this match from alternative sources according to a fundraising plan. It is possible that funds will be available from Defra via the Dorset National Landscape Partnership in 25-26, but this support is unconfirmed. If unsuccessful the team will work with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to reprofile the budget accordingly.

## 2. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications



There are no negative impacts to the environment.

This proposed project supports the Council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023, in particular its vision for a nature-positive Dorset and its ambition that green measures help generate stronger and healthier communities. It strongly aligns to the strategy's Mission 8.3 (*Natural assets & nature-based solutions: Enable wider delivery and enable nature-based solutions*), as an instance of a nature-based health and wellbeing initiative.

## 3. Well-being and Health Implications

A key outcome is that the project will improve the health and well-being of Dorset residents through nature connectedness and social inclusion. The team will target those that are risk of social isolation and who want to access nature but face a barrier to achieving this successfully.

## 4. Other Implications

Legal Services have reviewed the terms and conditions of grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and have no concerns.

There are no other known implications.

**5. Risk Assessment**

There are no significant risks. The Dorset National Landscape have a successful track record in delivering projects on time, in budget and to a high quality.

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

Current Risk: low

Residual Risk: low

**6. Equalities Impact Assessment**

A EqIA has been signed off with the following actions:

To ensure the service provides equitable opportunities and that there is effective support all staff and volunteers will undergo Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training as part of the induction to the project. They will also attend awareness raising days throughout delivery to highlight particular groups needs such as mental health awareness and dementia awareness.

Volunteers will be supported by staff, and whilst Dorset National Landscape officers do not foresee any negative experiences for any of the protected characteristics, there will be a clear pathway for people being supported and the volunteers to raise concerns or issues which can then be dealt with promptly.

**7. Appendices**

**a) Appendix 1: Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations**

**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	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact

Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	Minor positive impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

<b>Corporate Plan Aims</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Prosperity	neutral
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	neutral
Responsive & Customer Focused	neutral

### TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
<b>Energy</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Buildings &amp; Assets</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Transport</b>	
Consider how participants can be encouraged to utilise low emission, public and active modes where appropriate.	Dorset National Landscape officers will promote and encourage the use of these travel modes for our nature buddies and offer activities that link in with public transport or are local enough to walk/cycle etc.
<b>Green Economy</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Food &amp; Drink</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Waste</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Natural Assets &amp; Ecology</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Water</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Resilience &amp; Adaptation</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	

#### b) Appendix 2: Approved purposes and budget

- Grant: £248,811 (68%)
- Total Project Cost: £382,454 (see 'Financial Implications' for detail)
- Project Approved Purposes:
  - 6 webinars for 100 people and general awareness building (reaching 660 people).
  - A training package for organisations (20) and volunteers (100) to support engagement.
  - Recruitment of an evaluation contractor.
  - A digital accessibility audit and creation of new content.
  - Collaboration with Volunteer Centre Dorset (VCD) to develop a pool of "neutral volunteers" to provide support where needed.
  - Specialised nature buddy scheme for 4-8 groups of adults living with disabilities (e.g. profound deafness, sight impairments and autism), including 12 farm visits.
  - A £46,000 community grants scheme supporting 20-25 projects by providing nature accessibility (capital works) and volunteer infrastructure for under resourced organisations (revenue).
- The Terms and Conditions that sit alongside these approved purposes can be found on the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) website.

## 8. **Background Papers.**

- View the [Nature Buddies Pilot Evaluation Report](#) (read from page 10).

## 9. **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).