

Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology

Progress Report – Summer 2024



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Since refreshing our strategy in early 2023, delivery of our programme has continued to demonstrate our commitment to a net zero, nature positive and resilient Dorset. Record temperatures in 2023 and 2024 have again underscored the imperative for us to proceed at pace as a council and a county to deliver a cleaner, greener Dorset. Spurred on by the 2023 release of the IPCC's 6th Assessment Report, the latest UK State of Nature report, and the launch of the third National Adaptation Programme, the strengthened case for action catalysed further delivery across the year.¹
- 1.2. There is now evidence that the world has experienced 12 consecutive months of temperatures over 1.5°C above the pre-industrial average. Whilst this doesn't yet mean that the world has failed to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement (which would require exceeding the 1.5°C over a decade rather than just a single year), it is a worrying sign. The impacts are already being felt, and not just globally. For example, the UK saw greater frequency and intensity of downpours in late 2023 and early 2024, with significant knock-on impacts on agricultural productivity.² Moreover this threatens to further aggravate the continuing decline facing nature in the UK, with the latest evaluation finding again that one in six species are at risk of extinction.
- 1.3. It remains the case that taking action to decarbonise, support nature recovery, and adapt to now unavoidable change is an unprecedented opportunity: it will help us to be more efficient in how we use energy, materials, land and other key resources. And doing so gives us a big chance to make our food and energy systems more secure, our homes and transport healthier and cheaper to run, and to create new skilled jobs.
- 1.4. The council therefore maintains that it is not a priority to weigh against our socio-economic ambitions, but a lever to achieve them. Cleaner, greener systems for how we power, heat, feed and transport ourselves will enable us to nurture prosperous, stronger, healthier communities. And, importantly, the council will play an important role in ensuring a fair transition, so that measures are affordable and that everyone in our communities is protected and benefits.
- 1.5. To maintain transparency, we report biannually in two ways:
 - Spring/Summer reporting: qualitative narrative on delivery within our operational and facilitation programmes – i.e. our interventions.
 - Autumn/Winter reporting: quantitative reporting on the consequent changes to our council and county emissions trajectory – i.e. on the outcomes.This report is the first of our biannual reports for 2024. It provides a qualitative narrative of our own delivery on our strategy's missions, but does not provide an updated quantitative description of emissions or biodiversity outcomes – which will be provided in the subsequent Autumn/Winter reporting.³

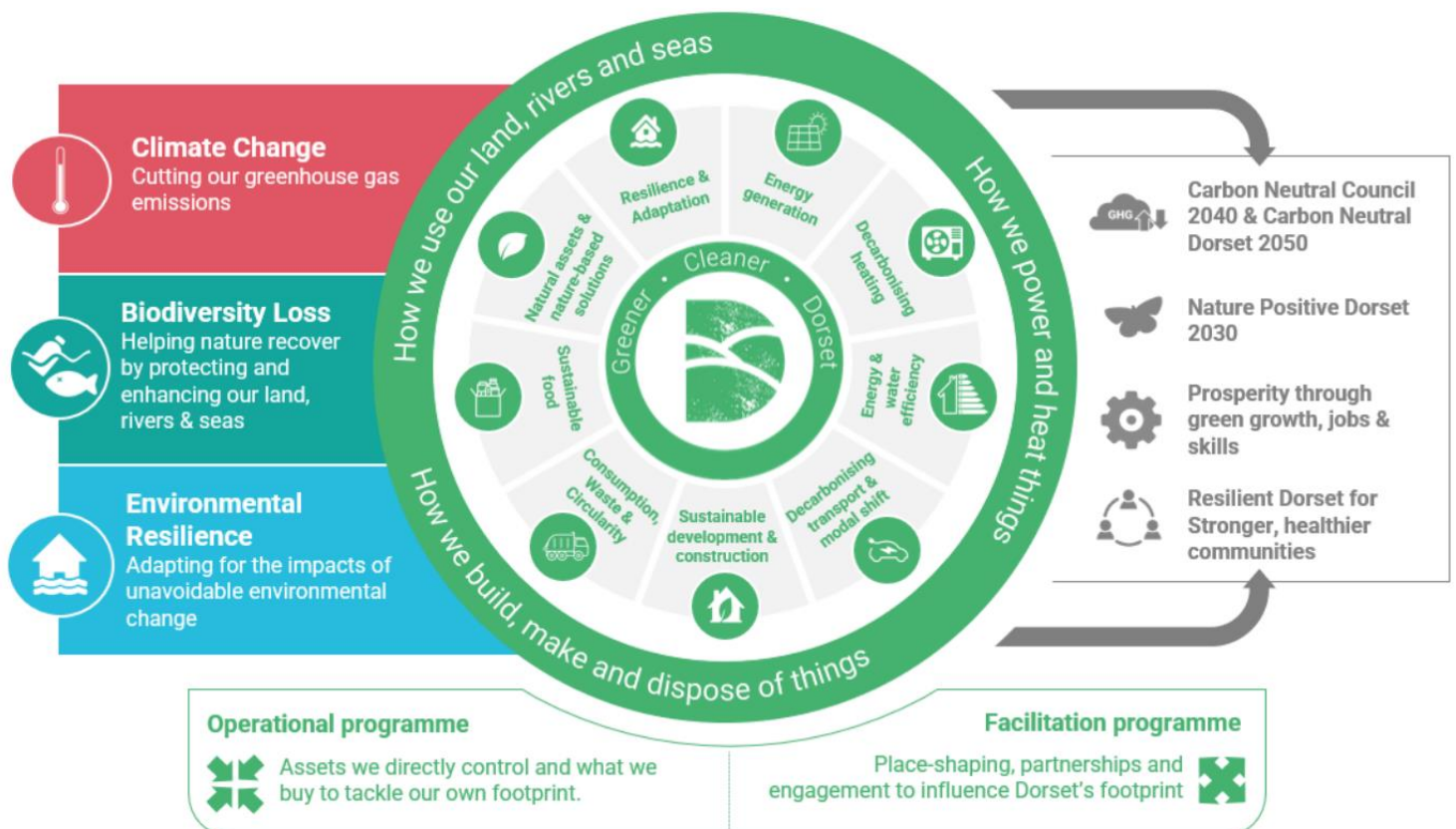
¹ [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023 \(ipcc.ch\)](#); [State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#); [Third National Adaptation Programme \(NAP3\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Climate change drives increase in storm rainfall - Met Office](#); [Disastrous fruit and vegetable crops must be 'wake-up call' for UK, say farmers | Farming | The Guardian](#)

³ Previous progress reports are available here: [What's happened so far - Dorset Council](#). The latest reports on national progress can be found from the Climate Change Committee/Office for Environmental Protection on [net zero](#), [natural environment](#), and [climate adaptation](#).

2. Context and strategy

- 2.1. Dorset Council’s first climate and ecology strategy and action plan were adopted by Full Council on 15 July 2021, setting clear targets towards a carbon neutral council by 2040 and a carbon neutral county by 2050. Our refreshed strategy was adopted in March 2023, and ‘Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology’ was also a priority in the 2022-24 council plan.
- 2.2. Our refreshed strategy is centred 3 core challenges or ‘pillars’:
- Climate Change (cutting greenhouse gas emissions)
 - Biodiversity Loss (nature recovery)
 - Environmental resilience (adaptation)
- Each of these is important and they are each interdependent in the sense that failure to achieve any one of them will frustrate the achievement of the others.
- 2.3. The strategy accordingly responds to those challenges with 9 core missions. These are delivered through our operational programme (focusing on our own organisational impacts as a council) and our facilitation programme (focusing on work to support change in Dorset beyond the council).




- 2.4. Our last (Autumn/Winter 2023) quantitative report⁴ noted that:
- Compared to our reported baseline emissions (2017 data) *Dorset (county) emissions* reduced by around 10% by 2021. The three most significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Dorset are transport (29%), agriculture (33%) and domestic sources (22%). Total emissions were up by 6% on the year to 2021 however, which mirrors the 6% increase in national emissions due to a post-Covid rebound. Consequently, Dorset is now off target for the county’s decarbonisation trajectory.

⁴ [2023 Autumn/Winter Progress Report](#)

- Compared to our baseline year (2019) *Dorset Council emissions* have reduced by approximately 27%. By far the largest contributors to Dorset Council emissions are the energy use in our buildings, and fuel used for our fleet of vehicles. We have therefore managed to remain on our target trajectory.
- Around 22% of Dorset’s land falls within our ecological network, but only around a third of the network is known to be in good condition – with a fifth known to be in poor condition.

3. 2023/24 progress

- 3.1. 2023/24 has seen considerable further delivery across a vast programme of work, including:
- Further retrofit works through our extended Low Carbon Dorset programme, to support the decarbonisation of non-residential buildings locally.
 - Enhanced domestic retrofit activity through Healthy Homes Dorset, supported by receipt of Homes Upgrade Grant funding.
 - Publication of our Planning for Climate Change guidance.
 - An in-depth examination into grid constraints, led by our Places and Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
 - Significant progress in developing major strategies, such as our Local Transport Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
 - Commencement of the next phase of our public EV charger programme.
 - Major active travel infrastructure projects.
 - Enhanced development mitigation through implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain, and the award of major funding for nutrient mitigation.
 - Our becoming the #1 unitary for recycling.
 - Allocation of all remaining funds within Dorset National Landscape’s £2.4m Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
 - The launch of our Community Tree Programme.
 - Kickstarting new work on adaptation, procurement and partnership working.
- 3.2. This work has been enabled in part thanks to our generous capital programme, and thanks to our successfully winning many external grants, including from the Shared Prosperity Fund, Rural England Prosperity Fund, SW Net Zero Hub Local Net Zero Fund, Homes Upgrade Grant, Green Light Fund, BSIP+ Fund, Nutrient Mitigation Fund, Natural Flood Management fund, and Innovate UK Net Zero Living Fund.
- 3.3. We were also pleased to be recognised through awards this year for our programmes. Significantly, we won Regen’s Public and Local Sector Net Zero Transformation Award, thanks to our building decarbonisation programme (incorporating our public sector programme, Low Carbon Dorset, and Healthy Homes Dorset). Additionally, our solar-powered ‘hotbox’ at Charminster Depot also received global recognition at the International Green Apple Environment Awards.
- 3.4. Further detail on this progress is described by mission in the following:



Mission 1: Power

Operational: Estate renewable energy generation, council energy contract
Facilitation: Large-scale installations, Small-scale & community installations, Local energy/flex markets, Biofuels & CCS, Energy planning & the grid, Planning policy & guidance

1. Operational (Council)

Estate generation: The first phase of our £18.2m grant-funded programme is nearing completion, having upgraded over 200 buildings (council, schools, libraries, and leisure centres) with over 350 measures. This included a £7m investment in solar PV, enabling another 5MW of (~13,000 panels) to bring total capacity on our assets to 6MW. Combined with the programme's wider measures, this is helping to save ~1,500 tCO₂e/yr, ~£1.2m/yr on bills – and helped cut building emissions by a fifth.⁵ A decarbonisation plan for our depots was also completed this year, which found potential for the installation of further solar PV on 14 depot buildings, to supplement that already in place at sites like Charminster, Crookhill, Ferndown, Swanage and Poundbury. The next phase of work will facilitate another 1-3MW, with outline designs now being undertaken for 49 sites towards likely procurement of works between October 2024 and January 2025.⁶ Grant funding has also been secured for further feasibility work for Charminster Depot specifically, which has potential for a further 51kWp of solar PV.

2. Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Large-scale installations: Five new applications for major projects have been submitted locally in the year to May (two solar farms (30MW and 19MW) and three battery storage facilities (31MW, 47.5MW and 400MW), and two major projects refused (a 12MW solar farm and a 60MW battery facility). Voltalia's South Farm Solar Park near Spetisbury became operational, whilst Centrica's 16MW solar farm near Winterborne is expected to do so in 2025. Significantly, four wind turbines at Alaska Wind Farm have now been installed near Wareham – our county's first major wind farm installation. Early engagement has been undertaken with Source Gallileo on its proposed 2GW offshore wind development.

Small-scale and community installations: Healthy Homes Dorset facilitated 31 solar PV installations in homes across the first contract period (2021-24), with 12 enabled in 2023-24 through new HUG2 funding.⁷ For non-domestic buildings, our Low Carbon Dorset programme has, since April 2023, supported another 130 organisations, allocated 42 grants, and facilitated the install of a further 2.4MW of renewable capacity – bringing the total facilitated to 13.34MW. It has completed or contracted almost 140 solar PV projects so far, with around another 20 now being processed. The programme has now supported over 700 organisations, and has a strong pipeline of future projects – and is funded until March 2025.⁸ Work is ongoing to promote the opportunities of new community energy funding. The addition of a new funding officer to the sustainability team is enabling us to offer better support to potential applicants.

Energy planning and the grid: In late 2023 and early 2024 a cross-party, 8-member task & finish group of the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee undertook a deep dive into grid constraints. Through a series of in-depth workshops the participants heard from local stakeholders and experts on the challenges, and the opportunities for strategic energy planning. The recommendations of the group – including developing a Local Area Energy

⁵ Considerable work was also undertaken over this year to support the undertaking of technical, financial and closedown audits by the funder Salix.

⁶ There are practical as well as resource constraints on delivery, including building roof structure and condition, and grid constraints.

⁷ Healthy Homes Dorset is a partnership project with Public Health Dorset and BCP Council; and delivered by Ridgewater Energy since April 2021. It provides free advice, home visits, and the installation of insulation and other energy saving measures across homes within wider Dorset. Its total partner funding for this period was £363,745.20, and it further acquired £1,723,296.10 from other grant funding sources (HUG2, ECO, LEAP, SPF, COMF etc.).

⁸ Low Carbon Dorset gives free advice and grant funding to local business and community organisations of all sizes. Since its creation it has supported over 1,000 local organisations and given £6.2m in grants to >220 organisations towards projects worth £17m – saving over 16kt CO₂e as a result. Initially funded through EU (ERDF) funding, the project has been extended until March 2025 thanks to £856k from government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund.

Plan, seizing the opportunity of Regional Energy System Planners, and strengthening relationships with network operators – were endorsed by Scrutiny and Cabinet in early 2024.⁹ Work is now underway to recruit an energy officer to take forward the recommendations. Work has also commenced with neighbouring authorities and the SW Net Zero Hub to jointly commission early stage work for a Local Area Energy Plan.

Development Planning: In December the council published three guidance documents on planning for climate change: an Interim guidance and position statement (to guide decision-makers), a Sustainability checklist (a requirement for applicants), and specific guidance for listed buildings. This includes, for instance, clarity on current local plan policies renewable development, and guidance on solar panel installation on listed buildings and in conservation areas. The position statement and sustainability checklist are interim documents prior to the forthcoming new Dorset Local Plan. It is hoped that the aforementioned Local Area Energy Plan can be developed in time to help inform the new Local Plan, building on the existing evidence commissioned for the strategic identification of wind farm sites.¹⁰



Mission 2: Heat

Operational: Estate heat decarbonisation planning and delivery

Facilitation: Residential and non-residential heating retrofit, heat networks

1. Operational (Council)

Building heat delivery: As noted above, the initial phase of our £18.2m grant-funded public sector decarbonisation scheme is nearing completion, having upgraded 200 buildings. This has included the installation of 17 heat pumps, and a passive-air cooling system at County Hall. The programme has achieved significant heat innovations, both through exemplifying the possibilities for listed buildings through the heat pump installation at Durlston Castle; and through two bespoke installations at leisure centres which will enable smart optimisation performance controls and ventilation improvements to significantly cut energy consumption. There are three further heat projects to complete within the programme, owing to factors like grid constraints.

Estate heat planning: Heat decarbonisation plans for another 125 sites are about to be commissioned (45 corporate sites, 80 schools), and a grant funding bid has been made to undertake a further 29. A Heat Decarbonisation Plan for the 21 sites in our depot estate was also completed this year, involving detailed site surveys and initial feasibility and cost benefit analysis for each site that included options to decarbonise heating, ventilation, and cooling systems. It identifies potential reduction of baseline energy consumption of almost 64%, and a cut in emissions of 209tCO₂e. Grant funding has been secured for further feasibility work at Charminster Depot as an exemplar site, which is due at the end of 2024.

Road surfacing heat: Our solar-powered 'hotbox' at Charminster Depot also received special recognition at the International Green Apple Environment Awards, competing against 800 nominations. We are the first council nationally to install one, enabling us to decarbonise the heating of asphalt for pothole and patching work. Manufactured by Proteus Equipment, it cost the same as the equivalent gas-powered unit but enables cuts to bills and emissions by over 80,000kg/yr. We've subsequently been invited to receive Green World Ambassador status as a result of this innovation. We are also investigating new materials being developed by our strategic partner, Heidelberg Materials, that can be produced at even lower temperatures to enable further heat efficiencies in the manufacturing process.

⁹ See the enquiries [final report](#). The work has also been developed as a case study by Regen ([Case study: Dorset Council's grid enquiry - Regen](#)), and the method and templates have been shared with other local authorities through an APSE Energy webinar.

¹⁰ [Dorset Council Local Plan evidence and background papers](#)

2. Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Building heating retrofit: Our Low Carbon Dorset programme has, since April 2023, supported a further 130 organisations and allocated 42 grants – thanks to an extension of the programme to March 2025. Amongst other low carbon measures, it has now facilitated over 20 heat pump projects for non-domestic buildings, with another 5 contracted or being processed – alongside other heating interventions like biomass boiler installations. This includes, amongst others, heat pumps at St Mary’s Church in Beaminster, Sherborne Abbey, a Christchurch garden centre, Kingston Maurward College, Charlton Marshall Village Hall, and Dorchester Cricket Pavilion – and a biomass boiler at Dorchester Corn Exchange. Healthy Homes Dorset has now facilitated the installation of 9 air source heat pumps over the first contracted period (2021-24). There has been an uptick over the last year, with 8 of these enabled by the new Homes Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2) programme.¹¹

Planning guidance: The December publication of an interim guidance and position statement, sustainability checklist, and listed buildings guidance included signposting to the existing local plan policies on low carbon heat, as well as many helpful case studies on low carbon heating retrofitting in sensitive buildings – including at Durlston Castle and Athelhampton House. The position statement and sustainability checklist are interim documents prior to the forthcoming new Dorset Local Plan.

Heat networks: Two heat networks were granted planning permission this year, both within Weymouth (one district ground-source network for 260 customer connections, and one communal air-source network for 37). The council also supported Dorset County Hospital’s successful bid for Heat Network Delivery Unit funding for feasibility analysis on a Dorchester heat network, which could potentially serve our own estate. It could also provide lessons on the potential for heat networks in the county more broadly.



Mission 3: Energy & water efficiency

Operational: Building, equipment, and street asset efficiency

Facilitation: Residential and non-residential retrofit

1. Operational (Council)

Estate efficiency: As noted above, the initial phase of our £18.2m grant-funded public sector decarbonisation scheme is nearing completion, having upgraded 200 buildings. This has included significant energy efficiency improvements, including 45 LED lighting upgrade projects and 185 heating control upgrades. The now finalised Heat Decarbonisation Plan for depots used a whole building approach that considered technological and behavioural energy efficiency opportunities – including a mix of LED upgrades, energy control systems and fabric upgrades. The fabric upgrades alone could help cut energy consumption by almost 253.5kWh/yr and save 46.7tCO₂e. As noted above, plans for another 125 sites are about to be commissioned (45 corporate sites, 80 schools), and a grant funding bid has been made to undertake a further 29.

Street assets: Dorset’s ~50,000 streetlights and ~4,600 lit signs and bollards have a carbon footprint of 1.8 ktCO₂e (around 8% of our operational footprint, but which still includes lights in the Christchurch area of BCP until 2032). Our street lighting is provided by Enerveo Ltd under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract, with the service being governed by the council’s street lighting policy. Part night lighting was introduced by that policy to all areas with the lowest levels of highway use in 2011. Currently our £2.5m LED upgrades programme from the climate fund is running until 2026, with a further £500k investment in 23/24 and 40% of our streetlights have now been upgraded to LED. This

¹¹ The HUG2 programme is funded by a £4.3M government grant awarded in 2023. The other heat pump was funded through ECO2 grant funding in the preceding period (2022-23). HUG2 specifically targets homes which are off-gas, have low EPC ratings (D-G) and where residents are on a low income, receive benefits or live in a decile 1-3 Lower Super Output Area.

programme, along with part night lighting and other investment measures, has helped to reduce the service overall energy consumption by 58% since 2008.

2. Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Building retrofit: Our Low Carbon Dorset programme has supported a further 130 organisations and allocated 42 grants since April, thanks to an extension of the programme to March 2025. It has now facilitated over one hundred energy efficiency projects for non-domestic buildings, with another 20 contracted or being processed – including works such as LED and equipment upgrades. Healthy Homes Dorset is also continuing to facilitate household energy efficiency upgrades. In 23/24, initial customer engagements grew by over a third. It undertook 454 initial home visits and upgraded 309 properties with 354 energy efficiency measures (116 cavity wall insulations and 238 loft insulations). Its activity has been boosted thanks to winning £4.3m of HUG2 funding in 2023, for programme of works until March 2025. Including measures provided through this and other external grant-funded sources, in 23/24 it helped to save £363,343/yr on bills and 48,200tCO₂e over the lifetime of installed measures. Across the 2021-24 contracted period, the programme has now upgraded a total of 1,128 properties with 1,381 insulation measures, 7,919 energy saving bulbs, 4,467 radiator reflectors, and 751 door/window draught-proofing measures amongst others. The scheme has also been complemented by the council’s MEES Enforcement Project, which helped improve over 200 privately rented homes rated EPC F-G – and which developed an innovative online ‘Energy Rating Improver’ tool to inform landlords on options and costs. Wider facilitation is also being enabled through our participation in the Lendology scheme (which offers low-cost loans to households for energy efficiency upgrades), and we are also engaged with the SW Net Zero Hub on supporting potential further consortium bids for Wave 3 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund bids (expected to open Summer 2024).¹²

Planning checklist: The December publication of an Interim guidance and position statement, Sustainability checklist, and listed buildings guidance included guidance on energy and water efficiency. The position statement and sustainability checklist are interim documents prior to the forthcoming new Dorset Local Plan.



Mission 4: Transport

Operational: Fleet, Charging Infrastructure, Business travel and Commuting

Facilitation: Local Transport Plan, Charging infrastructure and alternative fuels, Active Travel, Public Transport, Digital infrastructure

Operational (Council)

Fleet and charging infrastructure: Our fleet contains 587 vehicles, of which around a fifth (121) are small cars/vans, and the rest larger vehicles. They make up around a quarter of our operational emissions, which have been rising since 2020. There are 20 small EVs in the fleet to date¹³, and another 7 are due for delivery imminently – with 7 further vans due to be ordered soon. There is also potential to purchase a further 13 vans this year, depending upon factors such as infrastructure. The remaining 147 small vehicles are planned to be electrified by 2030. Supporting this there are 22 charge points at 3 council sites currently – with 14 further due to be completed at 7 sites imminently, and a further 20 planned at 15 new sites. Options to decarbonise the larger fleet are being explored, with opportunity in the near term for HVO as technologies for alternative fuels develop in the longer-term.

¹² Lacking our own social housing stock, our role in social housing decarbonisation is to support facilitation of consortia bids, which are typically led on a regional basis by the Net Zero Hub. We previously supported the successful bid to Wave 2.1, for which the Hub was awarded £37.7m for ‘fabric first’ upgrades.

¹³ Comprising 12 in the pool car fleet, 1 Heath Partnership vehicle, 2 leased vans in Highways, 2 small vans and 1 sweeper in Waste, and 2 All-terrain vehicles in Coast and Greenspace

Business travel and commuting: Travel constitutes around a third of our operational emissions, and business travel emissions are rising. A council Travel Plan is now in development to facilitate more sustainable modes of business travel and commuting. It will introduce a travel hierarchy and support teams to improve with a travel efficiency rating to ground targets for improvement.

Waste collection route optimisation: The waste team are currently working on a project to create a model of the household collection rounds, called the 'as is model' – developed using route optimisation software Fleetroute. The model will be used to review the efficiency of the rounds, balance the rounds, model improvements and establish where we can create capacity to accommodate new property growth, additional materials, etc.

Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Local Transport Plan 4: Work is continuing to develop a new vision-led and outcome-focused Local Transport Plan, co-produced with BCP to cover wider Dorset. The plan will set a carbon baseline and carbon reduction pathway for transport. Residents were invited in early 2024 to share views on the future of travel and transport, enabling us to understand the needs of the diverse communities which live and work in Dorset. Consultation on a draft is due to take place in spring 2025. Additionally, on a regional scale, over the last year Western Gateway (our regional Sub-national Transport Body) has launched several key strategies, including its long-term 2050 Strategic Transport Plan (which has decarbonisation as one of its five priorities); an Electric Vehicle Charging Study that forecasts regional EV uptake; and an Alternative Fuels for Road Freight Strategy.

Public EV chargers: The number of public chargers has now grown to 244 (around a third of which are council sponsored) – nearly a fourfold increase from 63 in 2019. Phase 2 of our public charger programme was successfully completed in 2023, which saw the installation of 33 charge-points (27x fast, 2x rapid, 4x ultra-rapid) – bringing the total number of council-sponsored charge-points from phases 1 & 2 to 59. Installations over this year include a new rapid 50kW charge-point at Howards Lane Car Park in Wareham, installed with support from Wareham Town Council and in partnership with Joju and Mer. Phase 3 (2023-26) has now launched, with the aim of getting 80% of local households within a 10-minute walk of a public EV charge-point by 2030 (with an anticipated 2,500 needed by then). This phase is focusing more on rural areas and households unable to charge at home, with ambitions for 'a charge-point in every village' – with the prior two phases having focused more on main towns. Co-funded by government's LEVI scheme, charging company Mer, and the council, the programme could see as many as 200 charge-points installed, 3 charging hubs, and enhancements to the existing network. Phase 5 (2025-27) will focus on on-street residential chargers in main towns with a low-density of off-street parking. A decision from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles on the award of our £2.49 allocation of LEVI funding is expected in August.

Active travel: The council's Active Travel Infrastructure Plan is being developed for publication later this year, which will provide a long-term strategy identifying prioritised routes.¹⁴ Infrastructure improvements along Wimborne Road East and West in Ferndown were completed (funded by government's Transforming Cities Fund); as have improvements at Fairfield Road in Dorchester (funded by government's Active Travel Fund). We were further awarded £576k through government's Green Light Fund to upgrade junction signalling in Dorchester, which will further enable safer active travel and bus priority. The Bike Share Scheme was extended into Corfe Mullen and Upton in

¹⁴ It follows a community consultation exercise in December where residents expressed views on which active travel routes are important to them and the barriers to walking, cycling or wheeling.

November, adding 80 bikes including e-bikes.¹⁵ A new Bike Share Scheme will be launched by the autumn in the Dorchester, Weymouth, and Portland area and include 121 e-bikes and around 30 collection/drop off bays. The Bike it Plus project has supported 36 schools over the last year – with >65% of surveyed schools finding a rise in active travel by pupils as a result, which if sustained over the year could save 20tCO2e.

Public transport: The council was awarded £884k of BSIP+ funding in 2023/24 to support delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, to help protect services and maintain essential connectivity. Work has commenced on a refreshed BSIP to set out new programmes for delivery and ambitions/priorities for 2025 and beyond (subject to funding). Ferndown and Wimborne has benefited from increased services and a new route in Wimborne (along Leigh Road), thanks to further government BSIP funding secured by BCP. Working with Go South Coast, we also submitted a £2.5m bid to government's ZEBRA scheme for a £6.4m project of 10 electric buses and an electric depot in Swanage – but this was sadly unsuccessful, with only 25 of 45 applicants receiving funding.

Digital infrastructure: In September the council adopted our new Digital Infrastructure and Inclusion Strategy. It incorporates net zero as one of its five themes, highlighting the importance of digital infrastructure for enabling reductions in transport emissions, as well as its importance for environmental monitoring for climate mitigation and adaptation. It commits to better understand and measure the contribution of digital infrastructure and inclusion for net zero, and to support programmes that facilitate its delivery.



Mission 5: Development

Operational: Estate new builds standards

Facilitation: Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, Development Management & Mitigation

Operational (Council)

Estate new builds: No activity on developing a sustainable new builds policy/standards for council buildings has been undertaken this year owing to capacity constraints.

Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Local Plan: Work is ongoing to develop a new Local Plan, which includes the preparation and review of background evidence. Strengthening the planning framework to encourage sustainable designs, layouts and construction methods will be achieved through the development of the new Local Plan, which is scheduled for mid-2027.¹⁶ There is a significant opportunity to align it to other forthcoming plans for the benefit of sustainability, including the Local Transport Plan and (if timely) a Local Area Energy Plan.¹⁷ Until it is adopted, the existing adopted local plans of the former district and borough councils will provide the main part of the development plan for their respective areas.¹⁸ Consequently, we published three climate change guidance documents in December 2023:

¹⁵ It extends the scheme beyond Wimborne, Ferndown, Poole, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Wool, and Studland – which since its 2022 launch has generated 11,000+ sustainable journeys and 34% mode shift.

¹⁶ [Guide to the new planning system \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

¹⁷ Some relevant evidence has already been commissioned for the earlier draft plan, such as for the strategic identification of wind farm sites: [Dorset Council Local Plan evidence and background papers](#)

¹⁸ Planning Inspectors issued their final report on examination of the Purbeck Local Plan in May 2024, and a report recommending its adoption due at council in mid-2024.

- An interim guidance and position statement – which provides guidance to decision makers on weighing up the benefits of addressing climate change with other material considerations. It addresses sustainable design and construction and renewable energy schemes.
- A sustainability checklist – to be completed by applicants for certain application types to check their schemes’ sustainable design and construction. The checklist covers energy efficiency, water efficiency, sustainable materials, waste, green infrastructure, sustainable drainage, adaptation and sustainable travel. The requirement to submit a sustainability checklist came into effect on 15 January 2024.
- Listed buildings guidance – providing guidance to householders on increasing energy efficiency in listed buildings and what measures would require consent.

The position statement and checklist are intended to be in place until the adoption of the Dorset Local Plan, encouraging best practice in the interim.

Neighbourhood Plans: Two new neighbourhood plans have been adopted over the course of this year for Blandford and for Chesil Bank, each of which contain valuable policies on sustainability. Three other plans now are at examination or referendum stages or pending formal adoption by Cabinet (Alderholt; Buckhorn Weston and Kington Magna; and Sturminster Marshall), whilst six others are under review.¹⁹

Mitigation: The council successfully bid for £4.63m of funding from the Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver mitigation for qualifying development in Poole Harbour catchment.²⁰ Governance and a high-level programme summary were agreed by Cabinet in March, alongside a proposed transition to a new approach to nitrogen neutrality to replace the existing SPD.²¹ Our ecologists continue to advise and operate the Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol²², which was updated this year to align to the requirements to Biodiversity Net Gain. Additionally, CIL and s106 funds continue to facilitate mitigation for important habitats such as Poole Harbour, Dorset Heaths and Chesil and the Fleet. It also supports flood resilience in Weymouth Town Centre, and during 2023 helped to facilitate the installation of solar PV and battery storage at Milborne St Andrew Village Hall.²³ Considerable work continued this year to implement Biodiversity Net Gain, which became mandatory in February and was extended to small developments in April. This work has included, *inter alia*, updates to our templates, guidance and webpages; provision of training; application to become a Responsible Body for conservation covenants; development of a s106 template to enable third party local landowners to supply biodiversity units; and work towards developing a business case for a habitat bank on our estate.



Mission 6: Waste & materials

Operational: Operational waste, Highways materials

Facilitation: Waste Strategy, waste reduction, reuse & recycling, organic waste and WfE, campaigns

Operational (Council)

¹⁹ See [Neighbourhood plans in Dorset - Dorset Council](#)

²⁰ Nutrient loading is primarily from agriculture but there is also a significant proportion from urban wastewater. Further development risks exacerbating this, so necessitates a reduction in overall nutrient loading to bring the harbour back into a favourable condition. Natural England’s suggested approach is for developments to demonstrate nutrient loading offsetting through the approach of Nutrient Neutrality.

²¹ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 12th March, 2024, 10.00 am - Dorset Council](#)

²² The Protocol enables an audit and review of ecological information submitted with applications. It is designed to meet the requirement of Natural England’s Protected Species Standing Advice and to address the mitigation hierarchy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

²³ The full Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2022/2023 was published in December: [Infrastructure Funding Statement \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#)

Operational waste: By 31 March 2025, businesses and non-household premises, including Dorset Council, will be required to recycle all their recyclable waste (excluding garden waste and plastic film) under the new 'Simpler Recycling' reforms introduced by the Government in October 2023. This includes paper, cardboard, metal (drinks cans, food tins and aluminium foil), plastic (bottles, pots, tubs and trays), drink cartons, glass bottles and jars, and food waste including tea bags, coffee grounds, leftovers or waste generated by food preparation. Due to the timeframe, work is already ongoing to start expanding the current Dorset Council recycling service across all our buildings as soon as possible to make sure we are fully compliant by March 2025.

Highways materials: A new, locally manufactured, sustainable surfacing material was introduced in August. It is manufactured from our own recycled planings and uses a cold bitumen process as a binder – considerably reducing emissions compared to hot manufacturing processes. We also continue to use cement bound granular material, which again recycles our own highway maintenance waste into a sustainable surfacing solution. The amount of low energy asphalt used in 2023-24 rose by 2%p to 44.11% of our total material laid; whilst inclusion of recycled materials in the mix for primary surfacing remains around 30%.

Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Waste strategy: Work is ongoing to produce a new Dorset Council Waste Strategy which will replace the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 and the updated version published in 2017. The document sets the strategic vision and framework for how we will deal with waste in Dorset in the longer term, but it has a focus on the actions that will be undertaken over the next 5 years, due to the significant legislative changes that is anticipated in that timeframe. The strategy will detail how we will continue to minimise waste and maximise recycling within Dorset and will identify the policy framework required for future decisions regarding service delivery, infrastructure developments and treatment options/facilities.

Simpler recycling reforms: For household waste, we already adhere to the majority of the 'Simpler Recycling' reforms through our 'Recycle For Dorset' kerbside collection scheme which includes paper, card, plastics, glass, metal, food and garden. However, by March 2026, we have to also collect drink cartons and aluminium foil. We are being proactive in our approach to meet this requirement, and have put the necessary arrangements in place to start collecting these additional materials in the autumn. By March 2027, local authorities are legally required to collect plastic films and flexibles. Work is ongoing to determine how we could potentially collect these materials but it will be heavily reliant on sufficient sorting infrastructure and end markets being available.²⁴

Waste reduction: Dorset Council now has one of the lowest quantities of residual waste per household in the country at 377.92 kilograms in 2022/23. Residual waste sent to landfill has been reduced to just 2%. The majority of our residual waste is now sent to the New Earth Mechanical Biological Treatment plant in Poole where organic and recyclable materials are extracted and leftover material is turned into fuel.

Reuse and Recycling: Dorset is now the #1 unitary council²⁵ in the country for recycling, with us now recycling 59.1% of collected waste, compared to a (declining) 43.4% national average. The team also facilitate a range of reuse activities, including maintaining the online 'zero waste' map, swish and give & take days, financial incentives and discounts for reusable nappies and feminine hygiene products, and subsidised home composters.

²⁴ Please see [Simpler Recycling - Dorset Council](#) for more details.

²⁵ Higher performing non-unitary councils are collection-only (i.e. they provide a kerbside service but not household recycling centres), which is why the 'unitary' aspect is significant.

Campaigns and engagement: We continue to maximise community engagement through social media, roadshows, local talks, fetes, agricultural shows, schools, site visits, library events, parish and town council liaison, our website, livery on vehicles, direct mail, container messaging (stickers and hangers on bins) and newsletters. Over the year we undertook 680 social media posts, 22 roadshows (reaching 1200 residents), and delivered recycling guides to 60,000 households. Campaigns include partnering with the Litter Lotto app to counter littering through a monthly prize scheme, and a roadside littering campaign (including introducing an online reporting and fining system). Our Litter Free Dorset programme also continues to support change on the ground with communities – with 23/24 campaigns including working with retailers to reduce single-use materials waste ('Bring Your Own'); improving and promoting Refill points; and a 'Bin Your Butt' campaign to tackle cigarette butt pollution. Significantly, it also launched the Sustainable Business Network in 2023, which now has 100 members; launched a Community Fund to support local projects; and trialled 'whole school approaches' to litter reduction with schools.

Route optimisation work: The waste team is also currently using an ICT system to enhance waste collection efficiency through a route optimisation project. This initiative utilises data from in-cab devices to redesign household waste collection routes, aiming to improve service delivery and accommodate future growth. The project also seeks to evenly balance the collection rounds and provide options for additional recyclable materials to be collected at the kerbside. This strategic approach is crucial for maintaining high service standards and adapting to upcoming changes.



Mission 7: Food

Operational: County farms (Soils and crops, Livestock, Machinery, Fertiliser & manure, Productivity and land use efficiency)

Facilitation: Dorset-wide agriculture (Soils and crops, Livestock, Machinery, Fertiliser & manure, Productivity and land use efficiency), Fisheries/mariculture, consumers & food waste

Operational (Council)

County farms: A county farms strategic options paper has been commissioned and is due to be finalised imminently to inform our future strategic approach to the county farms estate. Considered alongside a broad range of non-environmental opportunities, it will clarify opportunities for climate and nature including, *inter alia*, low-carbon farming practices, productivity enhancements, vehicle and machinery decarbonisation, sequestration measures, biodiversity enhancements, and renewable energy generation. Additionally, grant funding has been awarded to work with tenants to help better understand the existing and potential biodiversity of 16 county farms (827ha). Funding for some tenant projects has been provided through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Dorset-wide agriculture: Dorset National Landscape's £2.4m Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is ongoing until March 2025. It provides support to farmers and landowners for one-off projects that support the National Landscape, including for climate and nature projects – alongside the ongoing support provided through Government's agri-environment schemes. As of May, all remaining funds have been awarded and the programme has closed for new applications. 127 projects have been funded, including projects on soil carbon, afforestation, the development of Farm Resilience Plans, wildflower seed harvesting, support for regenerative practices, work with farm clusters on nature recovery, and work to grow awareness of carbon and biodiversity offset markets. Key outcomes so far include an additional 8.2km of hedgerows, 3153 trees planted, 21

farm clusters supported, 116 educational visits delivered, and 25,057ha of land supported.²⁶

Fisheries/mariculture: Dorset Coast Forum²⁷ continues to bring together stakeholders relevant to our coast and seas, co-producing projects and facilitating discussion. This year it launched a refreshed Dorset Coast Strategy, incorporating deliverables on promoting and enhancing sustainable fishing practices. The Forum also has a long history of working with commercial aquaculture (including for development of the Dorset Mariculture Strategy), and also maintains the Dorset aquaculture website.²⁸ November saw the award this year of £186,000 of MMO funding to Studland Bay Marine Partnership, to support the conservation of its marine ecosystems (including those of significant commercial value such as seabream, bass and flat fish), with 87 eco-moorings now successfully installed.

Food waste: Food waste makes up the largest component of our household black bag rubbish (19%). The waste team therefore undertake various targeted activities to increase participation and use of the kerbside food waste collection service by targeting low participation areas (as identified by crews), doorstepping in those areas and handing out food containers. Other activities include the ‘bonster monster’ school programme, food waste animations on social media and banners promoting the food waste service on waste collection vehicles and buses. As noted above (Mission 6 – Residual waste), all food waste collected continues to be treated in-county using anaerobic digestion which produces biogas used to generate electricity, and biofertilizer sold as a soil improver for plants and crops. The waste team also places a large focus on the successful ‘Love Food, Hate Waste’ campaign, which encourages people to reduce the amount of food that they produce, whilst saving money at the same time. It also highlights the close links between waste food and climate change (i.e. waste food accounts for more greenhouse gases than flying).



Mission 8: Nature

Operational: Greenspace management, Wider estate biodiversity & nature-based solutions

Facilitation: Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Nature recovery facilitation

Operational (Council)

Designated site, greenspace and verge management: Work continues to manage and protect our hundreds of hectares of designated site and greenspace assets, including our four country parks. In 2023 the council received 5 Green Flag Awards – an international quality mark for parks and green spaces – for our Avon Heath, Stour Meadows, Milldown, Durlston, and Thorncombe Woods, Black Heath and Hardy’s Birthplace sites. Our enhanced approaches to verge management (using cut and collect mowing to reduce soil fertility, slow growth rates and thereby create a better environment for wildflowers, and reducing cutting where it’s safe to do so) are continuing to significantly support biodiversity. The Wildlife Trust now designate a number of our verges as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), recognising their substantive conservation value, and we aim to establish more SNCIs this year. A farm near Blandford has also been trialling using arisings to incorporate into its compost mix, which we hope may be the first of a network of farms to do so that may thereby help facilitate wider adoption of cut-and-collect. Litter Free Dorset launched a ‘Love Your Verge’ campaign in collaboration with our greenspace team in response to the challenge to wildlife that roadside littering poses, and the costliness of cleanups.

²⁶ The FiPL programme ends in March 2025, presenting a risk given present unclarity about long-term facilitation beyond that point. There is therefore likely an advocacy opportunity to the new government regarding an extension to the programme at least for the duration of the Agricultural Transition (currently ending March 2027).

²⁷ Dorset Coast Forum is an independent and neutral partnership of almost 500 members, and which facilitates collaboration and discussion between a diverse set of local stakeholders. It is hosted by Dorset Council and co-funded in partnership with BCP, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and Dorset Wildlife Trust.

²⁸ [Dorset & Devon Aquaculture \(dorsetaquaculture.co.uk\)](https://dorsetaquaculture.co.uk)

County farms estate: As noted above in Mission 7, a county farms strategic options paper has been commissioned to inform our future strategic approach to the county farms estate; and Farming in Protected Landscapes Funding has been provided to tenants to support improved practices, as well as to facilitate analysis of the existing and potential biodiversity of 16 county farms (827ha). Additionally, a separately commissioned strategic study identified potential theoretical biodiversity uplift on the estate that could help to facilitate biodiversity units to enable local delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain.

Biodiversity Duty: In line with the council's strengthened Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act 2021, which requires us to consider what we can do to conserve *and enhance* biodiversity, work has been undertaken across the year to scope relevant action and policies.

Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: The council is continuing to progress work with BCP Council and Natural England to create a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset that will help us help grow, improve, and connect nature locally. It will provide the framework and mechanism to facilitate nature recovery by detailing the priorities for Dorset and mapping opportunities for nature – setting a blueprint for how we can fulfil our 30 by 30 target. Steering and advisory groups have been formed, and engagement is ongoing with partners, landowners, farmers, businesses, environmental organisations, and the public to inform the strategy – with significant progress on areas such as risk and opportunity scoping and mapping. Engagement to date has included Dorset COP, Dorset Coast Forum conference, and Dorset Association of Town & Parish Councils networking event – plus almost 250 people attended the Local Nature Partnerships Annual Forum, and an event for landowners and farmers. Wider engagement is due to commence imminently, towards production of a draft and consultation on a draft in late 2024 – and eventual adoption planned for Spring/Summer 2025.²⁹

Community Tree Fund: The Dorset Community Tree Fund was launched this year to support our communities to plant and care for trees locally across the county. Funded by the council and managed by the Dorset National Landscape team, the fund also offers support for the planning and design phases of planting projects, to support communities to plant the right trees in the right place.³⁰

Partnerships: The council continues to work closely with the Dorset Heaths Partnership, Litter Free Dorset, Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset & Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnerships, Local Nature Partnership, and Stour Valley Partnership. The Dorset National Landscapes continues to support extensive work to support action within its designated areas – facilitating delivery by farmers (as described above), communities (through its Dorset National Landscape Fund³¹), and by convening the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve and a forthcoming Purbeck Coast National Nature Reserve (seeking to improve a combined >3700ha). It has also secured almost £250k of Lottery funding to create a Nature Buddies Network in Dorset, to support community engagement with nature through a network of trained volunteers. Litter Free Dorset's Reconnecting with Nature Spaces is similarly aiming to enable inclusive access to nature, with phase one of its work in Weymouth and Portland complete, and Phase two in Shaftesbury and Ferndown now underway. In September the council also endorsed the Stour Valley Park Strategy and partnership model (of Dorset Council, BCP Council and the National Trust), to help facilitate the restoration of its river landscape – which could enable significant benefits for nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation.

²⁹ [Nature Recovery Dorset - Dorset Council](#)

³⁰ [Dorset Community Tree Fund | Dorset National Landscape \(dorset-nl.org.uk\)](#)

³¹ [Dorset National Landscape Fund | Dorset National Landscape \(dorset-nl.org.uk\)](#)

Relevant work on development mitigation (including Biodiversity Net Gain) is outlined in the update for Mission 5 above.



Mission 9: Adaptation and resilience

Operational: Council asset, staff and operational resilience

Facilitation: County adaptation approach, Flood and coastal resilience

Operational (Council)

Risk assessment: Work commenced in 2023 to gather input across council services on their vulnerability to climate-related risks in the medium and long term. This work paused due to staff capacity; but has now resumed following the recent recruitment of a climate resilience officer. Work to produce a council-wide climate risk assessment is now proceeding, with an initial assessment due in late 2024 following further internal engagement. Work will simultaneously explore an effective means to mainstreaming identified risks within our established corporate risk management approach.

Facilitation (Wider Dorset)

County adaptation programme: A new climate resilience officer has recently been recruited to kick-start work to develop a county-wide climate adaptation programme. Initial scoping of a programme with public sector partners has commenced, and work to prepare an initial risk assessment and action mapping has begun – with the intent to broaden this to a much wider set of stakeholders once trialled with public sector partners.

Flood and Coastal Resilience: This year saw the publication of the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which will help to inform the future planning framework and planning decision-making.³² Dorset National Landscape Partnership has been awarded £624k of funding from the Environment Agency for a natural flood management project within the Brit Catchment, aiming to reduce flood risk and flood defence maintenance costs through natural interventions that slow the flow of water. Our FCERM teams and Dorset Coast Forum also continues to facilitate work with communities on flood and coastal resilience measures. Projects over the last year include works to repair West Bay Harbour³³ and Weymouth Esplanade³⁴, the creation of a long-term Future Studland plan, the Charmouth and Swanage Coastal Transition Accelerator Programmes, the Portland Underhill to Wyke Regis Flood and Coastal Risk Management Project, the Lyme Regis Cobb Stabilisation Scheme, the Swanage Town Coastal Protection Scheme, the Weymouth FCERM Strategy, the Weymouth Harbour and Esplanade FCERM Scheme, Weymouth Quay regeneration³⁵, and the Swanage Coastal Management Scheme.



Cross-cutting enablers

Operational: Comms & engagement, Partnerships, Procurement, Decision-making, Training, Monitoring, Policy & Strategy embedding, Funding, Green skills and economy, lobbying

Operational (Council)

Comms and engagement: The council has published almost 40 press releases related to sustainability over the year, alongside accompanying social media. Successful campaigns have included the continuation of our 'Love Food, Hate Waste', 'Love Your Verge', and 'Let Grass Grow' campaigns – as well as the launch of Litter Free Dorset's 'Bring Your Own' campaign. A communications and engagement plan and 'Nature Recovery Dorset' brand has been developed, to support development of the strategy and its ongoing delivery beyond adoption. Consultative exercises have been undertaken for the Local

³² [Dorset Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - Dorset Council](#)

³³ [Updated: West Bay Harbour wall repair works - Dorset Council](#)

³⁴ [Maintenance works set to start at Greenhill on Weymouth seafront - Dorset Council](#)

³⁵ [Weymouth Quay Regeneration work to start - Dorset Council news](#)

Transport Plan³⁶, Active Travel Infrastructure Plan³⁷, Purbeck Local Plan³⁸, and Housing Strategy³⁹ - with another due later this year on the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy. A new Climate and Nature bulletin reporting on council climate related news was launched in February and sent to over 6k subscribers. Considerable community engagement was undertaken throughout the year, as described throughout this document, as well as a roadshow of air quality events⁴⁰ and Dorset's first COP – a community-led day of discussion and debate.⁴¹ Most recently, we have now launched the 'Our journey to net zero' exhibition, showcasing local businesses and organisations that have been supported by the Low Carbon Dorset programme to reduce their carbon footprints. The exhibition is touring the county until October or is viewable through the online virtual exhibition.⁴²

Partnerships: Partnerships work has continued through Dorset Heaths Partnership, Litter Free Dorset and its Sustainable Business Network, Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset & Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnerships, our Local Nature Partnership, Stour Valley Partnership, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Great South West, and our regional Sub-national Transport Body (Western Gateway). Our Public Sector Decarbonisation and Ecology Group with Dorset public sector partners has continued to meet on a regular basis to share best practice and develop collaborative opportunities – including kickstarting work for two priority collaborative programmes on procurement and adaptation. Additionally, a new partnerships officer has been recruited to support greater collaboration with communities, town & parish councils, schools and other external stakeholders.

Procurement: The council secured grant funding from Innovate UK to undertake a collaborative year-long project with public sector partners on sustainable procurement. The project aims to co-develop a joint local vision, carbon baseline and toolkit for public sector sustainable procurement in the county. Currently in its early stages and running until Aug/Sep 2025, the project will also imminently recruit a dedicated sustainable procurement officer to support the work.

Decision-making: The council's decision-making tool continues to be used for committee reports. No modifications have been made in the year, but a review of the wheel is planned for later in 2024 alongside accompanying training.

Training and briefings: A series of workshops was held with our reconstituted Executive Advisory Panel, providing interested members with a deep-dive into workstreams for particular missions. Additionally, a similar summary briefing was provided for all members on 7 March. Another All Member Briefing is scheduled to take place on 10 July.

Policy & Strategy embedding: Dorset's new Housing Strategy was finalised and adopted, recognising the importance of both new build standards and retrofit of existing homes to ensure a net zero, nature positive and climate resilient housing stock. In September the council adopted our new Digital Infrastructure and Inclusion Strategy. It incorporates net zero as one of its five themes, highlighting the importance of digital infrastructure for enabling reductions in transport emissions, as well as its importance for environmental monitoring for climate mitigation and adaptation. A sustainability service plan was also produced for Dorset Music Service. Work is either underway or due to commence on the

³⁶ [Local Transport Plan Opportunities and Issues - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](#)

³⁷ [Active Travel Infrastructure Plan - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](#)

³⁸ [Purbeck Local Plan supplementary proposed main modifications - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](#)

³⁹ [Housing Strategy - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](#)

⁴⁰ [Air quality community events - Dorset Council](#)

⁴¹ [Dorset COP 2023 | DCAN \(dorsetcan.org\)](#)

⁴² ['Our journey to net zero' exhibition](#)

new Council Plan, Council Travel Plan, Strategic Asset Management Plan, Local Transport Plan, Local Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Funding: The council has continued to be successful in attracting funding from a range of grant-funds during this year, including the Shared Prosperity Fund, Rural England Prosperity Fund, SW Net Zero Hub Local Net Zero Fund, Homes Upgrade Grant, Green Light Fund, BSIP+ Fund, Nutrient Mitigation Fund, Natural Flood Management fund, and Innovate UK Net Zero Living Fund. Further funds were also secured by our hosted partnerships, as mentioned throughout, such as the Dorset National Landscape Partnership's Natural Flood Management grant. We are also currently awaiting a response to a recent bid to the latest round of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Funding. The sustainability team has also recently recruited a dedicated funding officer, to maximise our capability and preparedness for future funding, and they are actively developing a pipeline of potential grant funded projects to ensure our readiness for opportunities as they arise.

Green skills & economy: An Investment Plan for our Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations was adopted in November, with a combined value of £6.4m. The Plan was developed in consultation with local stakeholders, and includes £395,000 for supporting decarbonisation (SPF), £155,000 for green skills courses (SPF), £206,918 for community sustainable energy (REPF) and £115,000 for active travel enhancements (REPF). Our teams have also input into ongoing work to refresh the Great South West Energy Prospectus, highlighting key energy system investment opportunities within the region.⁴³

4. Looking ahead:

- 4.1. We have achieved much so far, as outlined above. However, as we proceed our trajectory will likely get more difficult, and it will take significant effort to reach our next interim operational target and to get our county-wide trajectory back on target. Achieving this will require (a) increasing the pace and scale of our activity; (b) delivering 'smarter' by giving greater definition to our pathways and targets; and (c) strengthening our facilitation work by working more closely with our communities.
- 4.2. Previous scrutiny meetings have noted that whilst narrative commentary is welcome, there is difficulty in appraising whether work is at an adequate pace or scale without quantitative targets. We are therefore working towards meeting that in two ways:
 - a) In collaboration with Regen, we are aiming to develop a more comprehensive dashboard of quantitative indicators in addition to our high-level emission and biodiversity metrics, which will describe a wider range of indicators of progress. This will inevitably be constrained by data availability, but there are several significant data sources which could enable a richer picture than we have previously provided. We aim to prepare a prototype dashboard for our next (Autumn/Winter) quantitative progress report.
 - b) Fully responding to this really requires specifying detailed targets or mission-specific trajectories. Over the course of the last few months we have undertaken several operational deep dives with internal teams to develop a more detailed programme to meet our interim operational targets. Additionally, several of our emerging new strategies and plans will be critical to defining these, and therefore

⁴³ The previous 2023 version is available here: [Clean Energy Prospectus - The Great South West](#)

giving us a smarter path forward. For this reason, the next few years of the programme will benefit considerably from the development of our Strategic Asset Management Plan, council Travel Plan, new Local Plan, Local Transport Plan, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Local Area Energy Plan.

- 4.3. To support the development of further progress, we have recently recruited four new members of staff to our sustainability team and are aiming to recruit a further two. This is strengthening our capacity to expedite our operational programme, develop funding bids, strengthen our partnerships, develop new programmes on adaptation and procurement, and to develop a Local Area Energy Plan.