

# Cabinet

17 December 2024

## Dorset National Landscape (AONB) interim Management Plan

### For Decision

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio:**

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council

**Local Councillor(s):**

Cllr Bawden, Cllr Christopher, Cllr B Bolwell, Cllr D Bolwell, Cllr Williams, Cllr Monks, Cllr Eysenck, Cllr Kippax, Cllr Holland, Cllr Tarr, Cllr Biggs, Cllr D Taylor, Cllr Haynes, Cllr Murcer, Cllr Parker, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Somper, Cllr Jespersen, Cllr Clifford, Cllr G Taylor, Cllr Northam, Cllr Dickenson, Cllr O'Leary, Cllr Ireland, Cllr Baker, Cllr Beddow, Cllr Wilson, Cllr Ezzard, Cllr Holloway, Cllr Suttle, Cllr Trite

**Executive Director:**

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

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**Report Status:** Public

**Brief summary:**

The Dorset National Landscape, one of England's 34 areas of outstanding beauty, is protected in the national interest so that its natural beauty may be conserved and enhanced for future generations. This protected landscape covers 1129 km<sup>2</sup>, almost 40% of the Dorset Council area, and includes small areas in Somerset and Devon.

Under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, Dorset Council has a legal duty to work with partners to produce a management plan for the area on a cyclical basis. It discharges this duty through the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board and its dedicated team, hosted by Dorset Council.

The current plan<sup>1</sup> is dated 2019-2024 and was adopted by Dorset Council's predecessor councils between December 2018 and March 2019. These management plans have a 5-year term with a 50+ year vision; they are a material consideration in planning matters. They are also one of many plans that need to be considered in Dorset Council's plan-making processes.

It has relevance to the priorities of the draft Dorset Council Plan for 2024-2029 in the following ways:

- Provide high quality housing:
  - Outlining the approach to development in compliance with the statutory duty 'to seek to further the purposes of' National Landscape designation.
  - Supporting appropriate exception sites for affordable housing, particularly that led by Community Land Trusts.
- Grow our economy:
  - Supporting and promoting a green economy which benefits the protected landscape.
  - Promoting low-carbon tourism.
- Communities for all:
  - Promoting equitable access to greenspace so all may experience associated health and wellbeing benefits.
  - Promoting environmental learning experiences.
  - Promoting Nature-Based Solutions to increase resilience to environmental harms to communities and infrastructure, such as flooding.
- Respond to the climate and nature crisis:
  - Providing a framework for nature's recovery in the Dorset National Landscape.
  - Supporting climate adaptation and mitigation in farming and other rural land uses.

Since publication of the Landscapes Review<sup>2</sup> in 2019, government has been progressing some of its recommendations, including:

- new management plan guidance (currently only available in draft), and
- an explicit link between the management plans of Protected Landscapes and nature recovery targets within the Environment Act. This has been

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<sup>1</sup> [https://dorset-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/DAONB\\_Managementplan.pdf](https://dorset-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/DAONB_Managementplan.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8a19a3e5274a083d3b78bd/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf>

published as the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework<sup>3</sup> although guidance to the integration of these targets into the plan is still expected.

Due to the delayed production of these important items, the National Landscape management bodies were offered an extension in July 2022 by the minister responsible at the time, Lord Benyon. This letter enabled delay of a full management plan review until 2025; the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board opted to take the full term until December 2025. To enable existing plans to remain legally functional beyond their current dates, the minister's letter described the need for a 'plan on a page' to cover the interim period.

A draft plan meeting the minister's recommendations was produced by the Dorset National Landscape Team and subsequently approved by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board in May 2024 (Appendix 2). This draft plan is being brought to Dorset Council's Cabinet for adoption, so that the 2019-2024 Management Plan remains current until December 2025, at which time a new plan developed with wide stakeholder engagement will be ready for adoption.

**Recommendation:**

Cabinet adopts the Dorset National Landscape interim management plan.

**Reason for Recommendation:**

- a) to fulfil Dorset Council's legal obligations under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000
- b) to enable the existing management plan policy framework to remain current until a new plan is adopted

**1. Financial Implications**

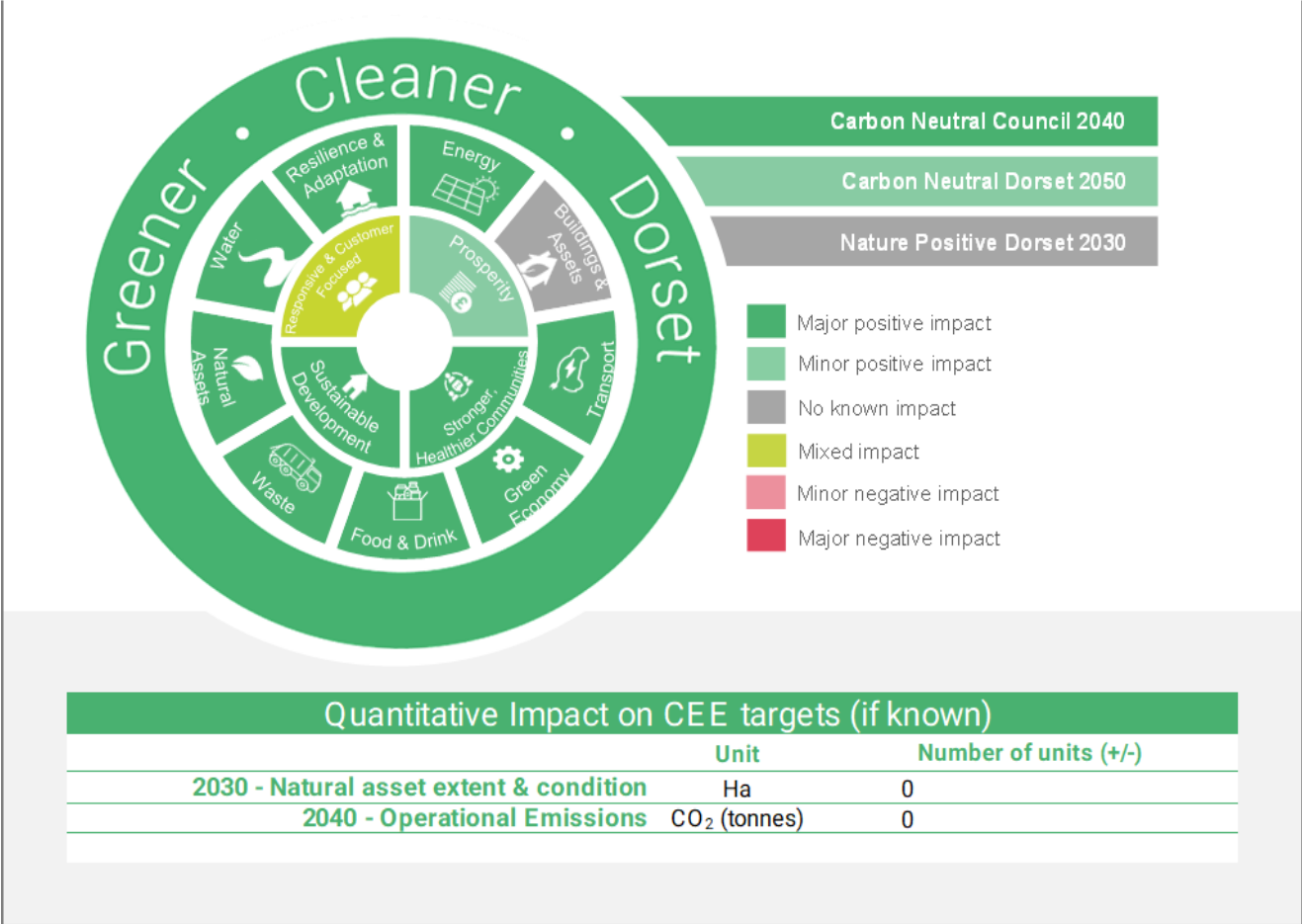
There are no financial implications to Dorset Council beyond its current commitments. Dorset Council provides an annual budget of £56,300 towards the Dorset National Landscape Partnership. This enables drawdown of significant funding from Defra to support the core operation of the Dorset National Landscape team (hosted by Dorset Council). The team's annual direct spend is frequently between £1.5M & £2.5M as it draws in significant additional external funds for project delivery across nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation, access enhancements,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

environmental education and engagement and the conservation of historic and cultural assets.

**2. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**



There are no negative impacts to the environment.

This proposed plan also supports delivery of the Dorset Council’s Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy 2023-2025, particularly the Nature Recovery Trajectory and missions 7 (sustainable food), 8 (natural assets & nature based solutions) and 9 (resilience & adaptation).

**3. Well-being and Health Implications**

The Dorset National Landscape management plan promotes increasing and broadening access to green and blue spaces to improve people’s

health and wellbeing. It also promotes initiatives which focus on reducing or overcoming barriers to access to greenspace for wellbeing.

4. **Other Implications**

There are no other known implications.

5. **Risk Assessment**

There are no significant risks to adopting this interim plan. Indeed, non-adoption would create a risk of reputation harm and the potential for environmental harms which are mitigated by the presence of the plan.

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**

As the previous plan had been subject to an EqIA, this interim plan has been screened out. The new Dorset National Landscape Management Plan for 2025-2030 will again be subject to a rigorous EqIA process.

7. **Appendices**

a) **Appendix 1: Accessible Impact Assessment & 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	major positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact
Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	minor positive impact
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	strongly supports it
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>	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Policy framework does enable supporting renewable energy development that is appropriate in scale and location.
<b>Buildings &amp; Assets</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Transport</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<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: the interim Dorset National Landscape Plan as recommended by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board**

**MANAGEMENT PLAN for the DORSET NATIONAL LANDSCAPE, an area of outstanding natural beauty**

The Dorset National Landscape Partnership will complete a review of the 2019-2024 AONB Management Plan and publish its successor plan by 31st December 2025. This interim document responds to the advice made by Lord Benyon in July 2022 enabling the normal timetable for a full review of the plan to be paused to allow for Defra to introduce two key items which follow recommendations from the Landscapes Review, and for their assimilation into the review process:

Management plan guidance: to encourage greater consistency and strength of plans across the country. It is proposed that the plan's structure will follow national guidance.

Protected landscapes outcomes and monitoring framework: to link the protected landscapes to key targets within the Environmental Improvement Plan, and provide data to assist with monitoring ([published 31 January '24](#)).

**Intentions for the next plan**

The Dorset National Landscape Partnership intends to produce a plan for the landscape that is legally and democratically sound, based on good consultation and compliant with central guidance.

It will articulate the local vision for the delivery of the statutory purpose of designation. In so doing it provides advice and guidance to relevant authorities subject to the Countryside & Rights of Way Act's s84 'duty to seek to further the purpose' which includes local planning authorities, government agencies, other statutory bodies and statutory undertakers. It will be prepared for adoption as a material consideration in strategic planning and development management.

It will provide a framework for delivering on the purpose of designation by the organisations represented on the Partnership Board, wider delivery partners and the local community. It will be prepared for use to prioritise action and resources to best effect for the designation and provides an evidence base to secure additional resources for that purpose.

It will also describe a framework for the delivery of relevant environmental targets under the Environment Act 2021.

## **Vision**

The plan will articulate a vision for the Dorset National Landscape where:

- Abundant wildlife and well-functioning natural systems give resilience to climate change and support low-impact food production.
- Vibrant culture and heritage give a sense of place and belonging.
- Immense beauty encourages a wide love and understanding of place, precipitating more pro-environmental behaviour.
- All people may access and understand natural beauty, contributing to community wellbeing and health.
- A more circular economy contributes to the area's conservation and enhancement.

## **Key objectives**

- Support the delivery of an apportionment of the Environment Act's environmental targets by a wide range of partners, including:
  - Furthering the Isle of Purbeck Landscape Recovery ambitions.
  - Delivering the funded Natural Flood Management programme for the Brit catchment, and supporting the community-led catchment management approach in the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams Catchment.
  - Supporting the active Landscape Recovery pilots in the National Landscape (Wareham Arc, Upper Axe and Brit Catchment).
  - Supporting the declaration of a new National Nature Reserve for the Purbeck Coast.
  - Supporting the nature recovery network which buffers, radiates from, and connects areas of high nature value.
- Supporting initiatives that increase understanding of, and participation in the conservation of, the landscape's natural, built and cultural heritage.
- Support underserved communities to access the special qualities of the National Landscape, including:
  - Developing activity which builds on the successes of Stepping into Nature and FLAVOURS.
  - Delivering the Dorset element of the national programme, Nature Calling.
- Encourage and facilitate access in ways that avoids harm to the National Landscape, including:
  - Visitor management for the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site.
- Supporting a transition to a more sustainable, circular economy including:



- Promoting a vision for regenerative and/or restorative farming and land management practices and supporting land-based businesses in their transition towards that vision.
  - Supporting Dorset Food & Drink, Litter Free Dorset and other relevant initiatives.
- Supporting planning authorities in their statutory requirement to seek to further the purpose of designation through good strategic planning and development management decisions.

### **Policy framework**

A revised policy framework will be developed responding to

- an updated assessment of needs, pressures and opportunities
- consultation with experts, partners and the wider community

In the interim, the [2019-2024 policy framework](#) will be carried forward in entirety.

## **8. Report Sign Off**

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