

Cabinet

9 December 2025

Adoption of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s):

All those whose wards are within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Executive Director:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

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Statutory Authority: Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000

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

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 Dorset Council is required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and publish a management plan for any and all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that fall wholly or partially within its area. Whilst the legislation remains unchanged and refers to AONB these protected landscapes are now more generally referred to as National Landscapes following national rebranding in 2023. There are two National Landscapes in the Dorset Council area, the Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Dorset Council has member and officer representation on both Partnership Boards and hosts the Dorset National Landscape team. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape team is hosted by Wiltshire Council.
- 1.2 Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new duty on relevant authorities in relation to management plans. For National Landscapes, this is enacted through Section 90A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This legal requirement is known as the 'seek to

further' duty. It is now a legal requirement for 'relevant authorities', including all public bodies, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the national landscapes. This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions relating to or affecting land in the National Landscape areas. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies, and targets of the Management Plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.

- 1.3 The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Board has prepared a revised Management Plan on behalf of the local authorities. This plan requires adoption or endorsement by the respective authorities in order to fulfil the legal requirements placed on them by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Successful delivery of management plans for protected landscapes can only be achieved by working collaboratively with other local authorities and key stakeholders across the whole National Landscape for each area. The council maintains a close working relationship with both the Dorset and Cranborne Chase National Landscapes to achieve this and has contributed to the development of these plans to help alignment with the council's current and emerging policies.
- 1.4 Dorset Council responded to the consultation on the draft management plan during its production and our comments have led to changes in the final plan. Officers remain concerned about policy SRC 6, that seeks to establish a system whereby Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and developer contributions be used to contribute funding towards the management of the National Landscape (policy SRC6), on the grounds of the increase in property values resulting from the quality of the designated landscape. The concern is that this does not accord with the legal framework under which developer contributions can be required. The policy is however worded as an action to 'initiate discussions' on this matter, and these discussions can take place between planning officers and the National Landscape team.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 **That Cabinet approve the adoption of the Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan (Management Plan) (attached as Appendix 2 to this report)**

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the council to, 'prepare and publish a Management Plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.' Adoption of the management plans prepared by each National Landscape, for and on behalf of the local authorities that fall within the protected areas, helps fulfil this part of the requirement.

4. Background

- 4.1 Dorset Council (“the Council”) is required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (“the Act”) to prepare and publish a management plan for any and all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (“AONB”) that fall wholly or partially within its area. AONB are now referred to as “National Landscapes” following national rebranding in 2023.
- 4.2 Section 89 of the Act requires the Council to, ‘prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.’ A National Landscape Board, if such one has been designated, prepares management plans on behalf of the relevant local authority, in consultation with the local authorities for the relevant AONBs as a single plan, which is then adopted by the respective authorities.
- 4.3 Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 amended Sections 89 and 90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and introduced a new Section 90A. Under these amendments the Secretary of State may by regulations make provisions (a) requiring a plan under Section 89 relating to an AONB in England to contribute to the meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of part 1 of the Environment Act 2021 (“Improving the Natural Environment”); (b) setting how such a plan must contribute to the meeting of such targets; (c) setting out how a plan under Section 89 relating to an AONB in England must further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of that area. This legal requirement is known as the ‘seek to further’ duty
- 4.4 It is now a legal requirement for ‘relevant authorities’, including all public bodies, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the national landscapes (Section 85(1A) of the Act). This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions relating to or affecting land in the National Landscape areas. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies, and targets of the management plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.
- 4.5 Successful delivery of management plans for protected landscapes can only be achieved by working in partnership within local authorities, and collaboratively across the whole area of the National Landscape Board. The Council has a key role to play in this delivery. The Council maintains a close working relationship with the Partnership Boards of both the Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape to achieve this and has been an integral part in the development of these plans to help alignment with the council’s current and emerging policies.

5. Review of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan

- 5.1 National Landscape Management plans are required to be reviewed every five years. However, the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership formally agreed in 2023 that the former Management Plan 2019-24, continued as a material consideration in planning matters until the end of March 2025. A statement to that effect was distributed to all relevant local planning authorities in October 2023. This extension of the 2019-24 management plan allowed time for Natural England's Management Plan Guidance for National Landscapes and Defra's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) to be completed and hence ensure the Cranborne Chase Management Plan followed the latest guidance.
- 5.2 During Cranborne Chase Board meetings in 2023, the Board stated that the review should be a 'light touch' one, primarily updating where necessary with new sections only added where needed. During 2028/29, in advance of the next 5-year review period, it is intended to undertake the more extensive research and studies the guidance document suggests.
- 5.3 Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new duty on relevant authorities in relation to management plans. For national landscapes, this is enacted through Section 90A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 5.4 The review of the current National Landscape Management Plan 2019-24 began via the Cranborne Chase National Landscape team in December 2023. The review was completed by the beginning of January 2025 and the draft plan was then sent out for formal consultation for six weeks until 27th February 2025. During this period all the relevant parishes were given the opportunity to respond to the first iteration of a management plan; there was an opportunity that many took up to talk about, comment on and leave suggestion for content from the thousands that visited the Cranborne Chase NL marquee at the Chalke History Festival and again, a similar opportunity was available to all those attending the Annual Forum. Finally, E-bulletins were sent to the 3000+ contacts database held by the NL, all of whom received a link to the draft Plan for comments. The final draft Cranborne Chase Plan was sent out to just over 800 recipients along with a 'Google form' for responses.
- 5.5 All comments have been reviewed, and a number of changes or additions to wording have been made as a result.
- 5.6 The main changes, apart from the updating of references to current or new policy/documents are as follows:
- 5.7 Defra expects a very strong emphasis on nature recovery together with the inclusion of the targets apportioned to each of the Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) from their Targets and Outcomes

Framework. The original Natural Environment chapter has therefore been superseded by a 'Nature Recovery' chapter instead.

- 5.8 There is an additional chapter added on climate change. This, alongside nature recovery, is an absolute requirement for any new National Landscape Management Plan. Each National Landscape must also produce a Climate Action Plan for inclusion in their Management Plans by 2028 at the latest. The 'Climate Change' chapter therefore deals more with generalities and principles at this time.
- 5.9 'Water' now also has its own chapter whereas it was only briefly included in the original Natural Environment chapter.
- 5.10 There are three key issues highlighted that will have a significant effect on achieving the purpose of designation and the ambitions of this management plan.

Key Issue 1 - Nature's decline and the ecological crisis;

Key Issue 2 - The climate emergency and

Key Issue 3 - Health and peoples' engagement with the natural environment.

- 5.11 These reflect Defra's four primary criteria. Defra requires National Landscapes to acknowledge and highlight how the outcomes and policies in the Plan target their four primary criteria of 'Nature, Climate, People and Place'. Icons will be used beside each Outcome in the final version of the Plan indicating which of these criteria it targets. The Plan will primarily be published as a web-based version as last time, but the NL team will investigate the options of the Plan being in other formats. The Plan is currently with a design company to create the final fully illustrated version.
- 5.12 The Cranborne Chase Management Plan 2025-2030 (Appendix 2) is being presented for adoption by all the relevant Local Authorities (Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and New Forest). Its adoption will fulfil the duties placed on the council under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as has been amended by the LURA 2023. It is therefore proposed that the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 be adopted, for use as:
- part of the evidence base for the preparation of the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans and other relevant council strategies, policies and projects;
 - as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and
 - to inform the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

6. Issues raised during consultation

- 6.1 Dorset Council submitted comments during the consultation on the draft management plan: these were prepared by officers with the approval of the Cabinet Member and were submitted on 25 February 2025. These suggestions have largely been taken on board but some planning matters will require further discussion during the implementation of the plan.
- 6.2 The management plan includes an aspirational policy PT7, stating that 'development proposals should aim to provide a net gain in biodiversity of at least 20%, particularly regarding the priority habitats listed in the Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan'. These targets are set through planning rather than through the National Landscape Management Plan, and national planning practice guidance is clear that plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain unless this can be justified and evidenced.
- 6.3 The management plan also refers to Community Infrastructure Levy being a mechanism that could allow a financial contribution towards National Landscape management, and includes policy SRC6 that 'by the end of 2026, initiate discussion to formulate a developer contribution scheme to secure monies from the enhanced property values to support the management of this National Landscape's character, qualities and landscapes which bring about those heightened values'.
- 6.4 Decisions about the setting of Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 planning obligations rest with the local planning authorities rather than the National Landscape partnerships, and are required to follow national legislation and policy. Such contributions can be applied only where there is a direct impact from a development which cannot be mitigated or dealt with through the planning application and design of the site directly. They must meet a number of tests set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy regulations. While the Council fully acknowledges and supports the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, this is considered to be best served by making planning decisions in the light of relevant local and national planning policy, and continuing to contribute funding towards the National Landscape partnership. This matter can be discussed further during the implementation of the management plan.

7. Alternative options considered

- 7.1 Whilst there is an option to not endorse or adopt the Management Plan there remains a duty on the council, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, to have such a plan in place and a strengthened duty that the Local Planning

Authorities, 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'. The plan has been through public consultation, comments have been considered, and the final management plan has been amended to take some of these into consideration.

- 7.2 Given the context above, the option not to present the plan for adoption has been dismissed. Where there are remaining concerns about the wording of some of the policies, these can be discussed with the National Landscape team during the implementation of the management plan, and during its next review.

8. Legal considerations

- 8.1 The Council is required by Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as has been amended by LURA 2023 to prepare and publish a management plan for any and all AONBs in its area. The management plans are prepared by the National Landscape Board acting on behalf of the relevant local authorities to ensure consistency across the respective landscapes. However, in order for the Council to be able to meet its obligation under the Act, the management plans require endorsement/ adoption by the council.
- 8.2 The use of Community Infrastructure Levy and developer contributions are controlled by the Community Infrastructure Levy regulations and are the responsibility of local planning authorities. The suggested developer contributions scheme is not considered to be in accordance with those regulations, and this will be discussed further with the National Landscape team.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no new financial implications arising from the proposal to adopt the Management Plan. The National Landscapes each receive annual revenue funding contributions according to DEFRA's funding formula, with 75% of the funding from central government and 25% combined local authority contributions. Dorset Council currently contributes £22,074.28 per annum to the running of the team. This is 29.48% of the combined local authority contributions, which total £74,877.84. Wiltshire Council is the principal local authority contributor, as it covers the largest area of the National Landscape: other contributing authorities are Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and Somerset Council.
- 9.2 The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership is hosted by Wiltshire Council and so that council manages the DEFRA grant funding for capital and

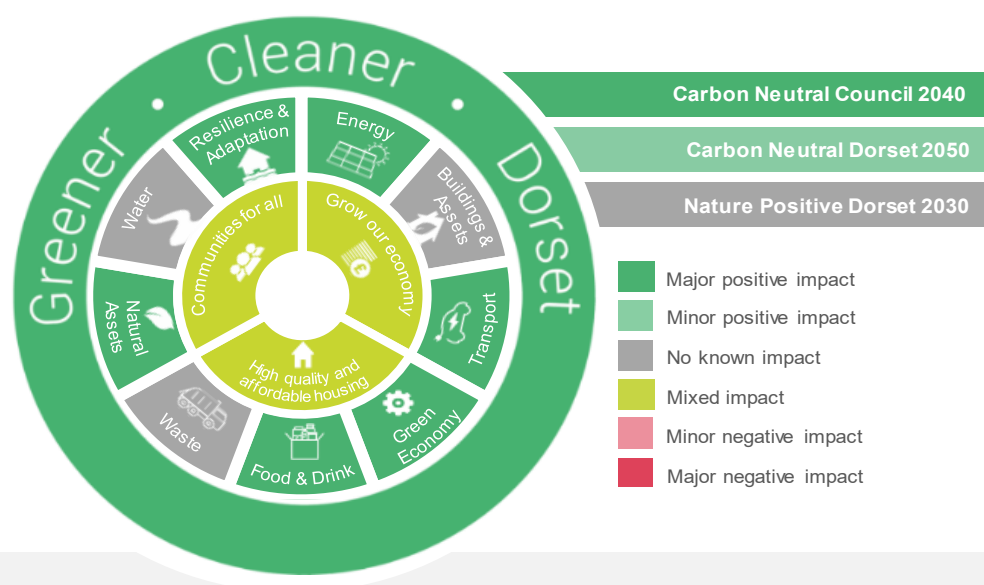
revenue. Grant income of £1.477m is expected for Cranborne Chase in 2025/26.

- 9.3 The suggestion that Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 contributions are made towards the National Landscape team would have financial implications for this authority, reducing the amount that could be spent on other infrastructure and affordable housing (or alternatively, having adverse impacts on the viability of development, which could harm the council's five-year housing land supply position).

10. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 10.1 The government has tasked National Landscapes to play their part in nature's recovery in line with its international declarations to protect 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (30x30) and the national targets set through its Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), emanating from its Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. There are ten targets in total with three of these specifically apportioned to each National Landscape. Details of how the Cranborne Chase National Landscape has considered Nature Recovery and Climate Change are set out in Chapters 5 and 6 of the Management Plan respectively.

Adoption of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)

	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO ₂ (tonnes)	

11. **Well-being and health implications**

- 11.1 The mental physical and emotional health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly understood and appreciated. The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people and crucially to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too.
- 11.2 Projects and programmes are delivered within the landscape to support access to, and enjoyment of, these nationally important areas. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape has a website and literature to guide people to activities and locations that they may wish to visit.

12. **Other implications**

- 12.1 Management plans for National Landscapes, while not constituting planning policy, can be a material consideration in planning decisions, and form part of the evidence base for Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and other relevant council strategies.

13. **Risk implications**

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

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

National Landscapes are required to review their management plans at least every 5 years. An extension of 12 months was agreed by Defra in this case but this has now finished. If the proposal is not approved the Council will be unable to demonstrate that it has fulfilled obligations under Section 89 of the Act which requires the Council to, 'prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.'

Any potential risk associated with adopting the management plan have been considered by officers as part of the consultation processes that informed the final version presented. Suggested inclusions and amendments were made at that time.

14. **Equalities**

- 14.1 National landscapes strive to be inclusive and accessible to all. The management plan aligns with and supports this and the ability of people who share protected characteristics, to access and enjoy the benefits of these important places.

15. **Appendices**

- 15.1 Appendix 1: Accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations
- 15.2 Appendix 2: Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan (Management Plan) (final text)

16. **Background papers**

- 16.1 The previous management plan for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (2019-2024) is online at [National Landscape Management Plan - Cranborne Chase National Landscape](#)

17. **Report sign-off**

- 17.1 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)

Appendix 1: Accessible Table of Impacts and 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	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	neutral
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	neutral

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	The strategy does refer to generating energy from low carbon sources, but only in a manner consistent with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the National Landscape designation. Further work on landscape sensitivity and opportunities for renewable energy generation across Dorset will be carried out as part of work on the Dorset Council Local Plan.
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	

No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	