

# Cabinet

**9 December 2025**

## **Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026 - 31**

### **For Decision**

**Cabinet Member:**

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

**Local Councillor(s):**

Cllr B Bawden, Cllr S Christopher, Cllr B Bolwell, Cllr D Bolwell, Cllr S Williams, Cllr S Clifford, Cllr G Taylor, Cllr C Monks, Cllr C Kippax, Cllr N Eynsenck, Cllr S Holland, Cllr D Taylor, Cllr R Tarr, Cllr D Northam, Cllr R Biggs, Cllr P Dickenson, Cllr L O'Leary, Cllr N Ireland, Cllr M Baker, Cllr L Beddow, Cllr B Wilson, Cllr B Ezzard, Cllr R Holloway, Cllr G Suttle, Cllr C Tomes, Cllr J Haynes, Cllr D Murcer, Cllr E Parker, Cllr B Cooper, Cllr S Jespersen, Cllr J Somper, Cllr R Legg

**Senior Leadership Team:**

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

**Report author and job title:** Bridget Betts, Environment, Policy & Partnership Manager

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**Statutory Authority:**

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

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 Dorset Council has responsibility for the Dorset National Landscape (formally known as the Dorset AONB) which is designated so that its natural beauty is conserved and enhanced for future generations.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory duty to review, and adopt a 5-year National Landscape Management Plan for each National Landscape in their areas
- 1.3 The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31 is a statutory document that sets out a strategic framework for conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty, aligned with national biodiversity targets and legal duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

- 1.4 The plan focuses on nature recovery, climate resilience, inclusive access, and sustainable development, structured around four priority themes: Working Landscape, Exploring and Engaging, Planning, and Ways of Working.
- 1.5 It has been shaped through extensive public and stakeholder consultation, with responses informing the final version which has been approved by their Partnership Board (including Dorset Council Member representation).
- 1.6 Over £10 million has been invested in landscape-scale projects over the past six years, with Dorset Council's annual contribution generating significant economic and social value.
- 1.7 Adoption of the plan ensures legal compliance, supports Dorset Council's four corporate priorities, in particular the climate and nature priority, and strengthens the council's position in planning and environmental decision-making.

## **2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Dorset Council adopt the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31

## **3. Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 To ensure that the statutory responsibilities in relation to the National Landscapes are met.

## **4. The report**

- 4.1. Management Plans for Protected Landscapes (National Landscapes) are statutory documents required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 4.2. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 strengthened the duty of public authorities to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in National Landscapes requiring Management Plans to contribute to national biodiversity targets, such as protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030.
- 4.3. Updated guidance was published by DEFRA and Natural England in June 2025 which means these plans must align with national biodiversity targets and are reviewed every 5 years.
- 4.4. The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31 (Appendix1) sets out a strategic framework for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape, one of 46 protected landscapes in the UK.
- 4.5. The plan places a strong emphasis on nature recovery, climate resilience, and inclusive access and has been shaped through extensive collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and the public.

- 4.6. The plan outlines a shared vision for the landscape, structured around four priority themes:
- Working Landscape – supporting sustainable farming, land management, and nature-based solutions.
  - Exploring, Understanding and Engaging – promoting access, education, and cultural heritage.
  - Planning – guiding development to respect and enhance landscape character and biodiversity.
  - Ways of Working – supporting establishment of good delivery partnerships.
- 4.7 Over the past six years, the Dorset National Landscape Partnership has invested over £10 million in projects supporting nature, heritage, access, and community engagement. The new plan builds on this foundation and sets out clear priorities for delivery by the Partnership, landowners, communities, and businesses.
- 4.8 Public consultation of the plan took place 14 July – 22 September 2025 received 140 responses from businesses (10), public (101), organisations (21), town and parish (5) and other (3). Responses were incorporated into the final plan.
- 4.9 The changes to the draft plan have been approved by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership board and they have approved the final plan for publication on 20 November 2025.

## **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 No alternative options considered as this is a statutory requirement.

## **6. Legal considerations**

- 6.1 Failure to adopt or align with the Management Plan could result in non-compliance with statutory duties and weaken the council's position in planning and environmental decision-making.

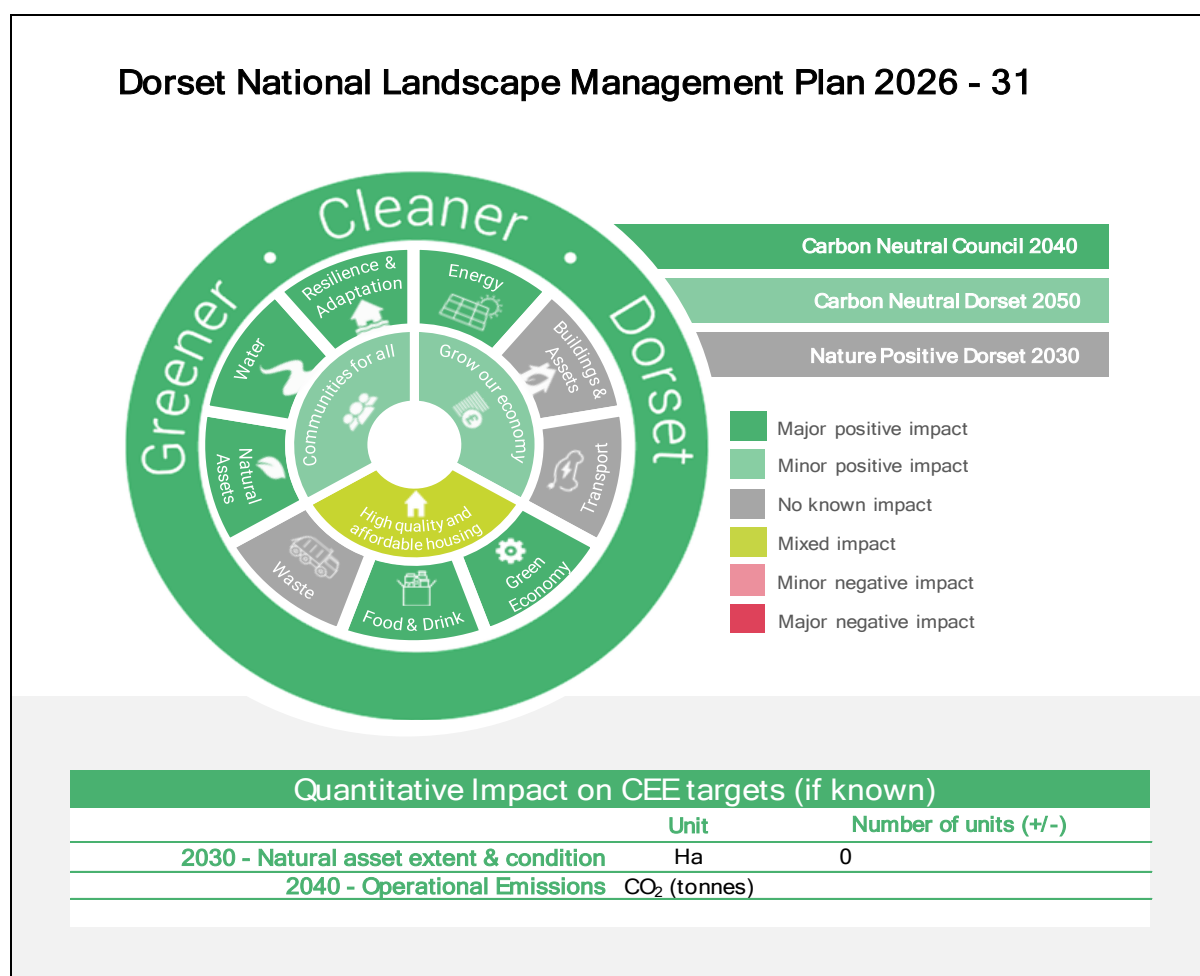
## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 Dorset Council annual contribution is £56,300; total direct spend by Dorset National Landscape Partnership for 2024-25 was £2.855M. The annual direct spend is typically around £1.8-2.2M
- 7.2 For every £1 invested by Dorset Council into the Dorset National Landscape, an estimated £50.59 is generated in direct economic value, with the total value rising to £83.70 when including partner contributions and volunteer time, demonstrating a strong return on investment and the wider social,

environmental, and economic benefits of supporting landscape-scale initiatives.

## 8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1. The plan is broad and supports work which contributes to the climate and nature crisis priority within the Dorset Council Plan 2024 - 2029 and the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25. Central to the Management Plan is a framework for nature recovery and climate resilience. It aligns with national biodiversity targets and supports climate adaptation and mitigation in farming, land use, and infrastructure planning.



The accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations for the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31 can be found in appendix 2.

## 9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 The Plan promotes inclusive access to greenspace, environmental education, and community engagement. It supports health and wellbeing through

connection to nature and encourages volunteering and local stewardship, ensuring all communities benefit from the landscape.

## 10. **Other implications**

- 10.1 The Management Plan supports this priority by guiding development within the Dorset National Landscape to ensure it respects the area's natural beauty. It promotes appropriate exception sites for affordable housing, particularly those led by Community Land Trusts, helping to meet local housing needs while maintaining landscape character.
- 10.2 The Plan contributes to economic growth by supporting sustainable land management, low-carbon tourism, and rural enterprise. It encourages nature-based solutions and green infrastructure that enhance the landscape while creating jobs and attracting investment.

## 11. **Risk implications**

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

Current Risk: HIGH - if the plans were not adopted, there would be some reputational risk as the plans are a statutory requirement)

Residual Risk: Low

## 12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 An EqlA was carried out (appendix 2) and the key outcomes stated that the Management Plan embeds a commitment to equity and inclusion by recognising structural inequalities in access to landscapes, diversifying governance, improving physical and digital accessibility, and broadening cultural representation. It also supports co-designed initiatives and inclusive volunteering, ensuring underserved communities are actively involved in shaping and benefiting from the Dorset National Landscape.
- 12.2 In addition a Strategic Environmental Assessment was carried out alongside the Management Plan to assess environmental, social, and economic impacts. Key issues such as health, rural isolation, and access for underserved communities were identified and addressed within the Plan's policies. All objectives were assessed as having neutral or positive impacts, with many delivering targeted benefits to those most in need.

## 13. **Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 - The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026–31
- 13.2 Appendix 2 – The accessible table of Impacts & table of recommendations

13.3 Appendix 3 The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan EQIA

**14. Background papers**

14.1 More information on the Dorset National Landscape work at: [Home | Dorset National Landscape](#)

**15. Report sign-off**

15.1 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).