



Dorset Council Biodiversity Report 2023-2025

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Foreword

This report marks an important milestone: Dorset Council's first Biodiversity Report spanning all council services.

Our Council Plan recognises that a thriving natural environment is fundamental to healthy communities. By connecting people with nature, we can ensure that everyone across Dorset has access to species-rich green spaces, resilient landscapes, and abundant wildlife.

In 2024, we declared a Nature Emergency. This was not a symbolic gesture; it was a clear commitment to act. We face profound challenges, but we also have a responsibility, and an opportunity, to protect and restore the natural environment for current and future generations.

This report brings together the effort, expertise, and passion of teams across the council. It highlights the work being done to create new space for nature, enhance and protect existing habitats, communicate the value of biodiversity, and help people connect more deeply with the natural world around them.

I am immensely proud to lead a council that is so committed to this work. Protecting nature is not the responsibility of a single service; it is a shared endeavour, and this report shows how we are rising to that challenge.

Cllr Nick Ireland

Leader of Dorset Council



1. Dorset Council and the Biodiversity Duty

1.1. About the authority

Dorset Council is a unitary authority, created in 2019 to deliver all local government services across the county of Dorset (excluding BCP Council area). It combined the former county and district councils into a single organisation. Dorset Council serves approximately 379,000 people over an area of 2491 km².

The council has 82 elected councillors and operates a Leader and Cabinet governance model, supported by a Chief Executive and senior leadership team. Its headquarters are located at County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ.

Dorset Council's functions include education, social care, planning, highways, waste services, environmental protection and stewardship of Dorset's natural environment, carried out within the governance framework set out in its [Constitution](#).



Figure 1 Nature-friendly planting outside County Hall (credit: Steve Wallis)

1.2. The Biodiversity Duty

Dorset Council must report on the policies, objectives and actions the council has taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity, to comply with the [Biodiversity Duty](#) strengthened in the Environment Act 2021.

1.2.1. Reporting period

Following the council's Biodiversity Duty First Considerations in December 2023, the reporting period for this first Biodiversity Report is December 2023 to December 2025. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the previous reporting period.

1.3. Our top biodiversity achievements

Figure 2 outlines some of our top biodiversity achievements in this reporting period, details of which can be found throughout the report.

Nature is a top priority

- Dorset Local Nature Recovery **Strategy** published
- Nature and climate one of the 4 priorities in the Dorset Council **plan**

Lots of people involved

- **28** teams or services across the council reporting actions to conserve or enhance biodiversity
- **299** members of the Nature Recovery Dorset network and growing
- **138k** visitor interactions at our country parks (Apr24-Sep25)

Benefits for wildlife and people

Space for nature a key part of **social care, education** and **housing** projects. For example:

- Edible kitchen gardens in **schools** and inclusion hubs
- Wildlife-friendly gardens in **extra care housing** and **supported living**
- 617 children involved in **tree planting** and **beach cleans**
- Nature-based **day opportunities** for older adults and those with complex needs

Habitat creation and enhancement

(2023- 2025)

- **4769** trees planted
- **6005m** hedgerow planted
- **3180m²** shrubs planted
- **345702m²** wildflower seed planting
- **5060m²** wetland creation
- **160140m²** invasive and non-native species removal
- **25** natural flood management projects
- **40%** reduction in glyphosate use for highways weed management
- **62%** of urban verges managed to enhance their value for nature
- **122** hectares of land management change to deliver nutrient mitigation
- **46** hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)

Investing in nature

(2023-2025)

- **£9.18M** approx. investment in nature through Countryside Stewardship agreements, Defra Capital Grants, National Landscape funding and the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund.

Figure 2 our top biodiversity achievements

2. Biodiversity in Council-wide objectives

This section shows how biodiversity has been considered within council-wide policies, plans and strategies between December 2023 to December 2025, and future actions that are going to be implemented or an aspiration for implementation in the next five years.

2.1. Dorset Council Plan 2024 - 2029

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Responding to the climate and nature crisis is one of four priorities in the Dorset Council Plan - The plan has a vision for a more sustainable Dorset, including helping nature to recover - The plan sets a strategic approach to halting nature decline, by working in collaboration to take immediate action to help protect and enhance our land, rivers, and seas for wildlife	- The Plan commits to several actions relevant to the duty, including: - Implement Dorset local nature recovery strategy - Develop a climate adaptation plan for Dorset and the council - Support sustainable farming - Work with water companies on water quality and pollution - Renew the Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Continue to support Dorset Coast Forum and Litter Free Dorset - Embed nature recovery within our contracts - Ensure the climate and nature priority is a major focus of delivery and shapes how we allocate resources and align service delivery

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The plan commits to the following targets:
 - 30% of our land to be in positive management for nature by 2030
 - 80% of our urban verges will be managed to enhance their value for nature by 2030
 - improve 300 miles of the Rights of Way network, making it more accessible to connect people's access to nature by 2030
 - 70% of our county farms land will be managed using sustainable farming practices that balance food production and nature by 2030
 - 79,000 hectares of land across Dorset Council and BCP council areas involved contributes to nature recovery through the Nature Recovery Dorset network by 2030
- Monitoring of progress against these Council Plan targets is reported on a [performance dashboard and in progress reports](#)

Challenges for future delivery

- Covered in the relevant functions below

2.2. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Biodiversity and nature recovery are one of three key pillars to the council’s Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh • Nature integrates through all 9 of the strategy’s missions, with mission 8 focusing on natural assets and nature-based solutions • Actions taken include: ○ Co-produced Dorset local nature recovery strategy ○ Established the community tree fund ○ Published a new county farms strategy ○ Supported farmers through Farming in Protected Landscapes ○ Developed and expanded highway verge programme	• Nature-based solutions for climate mitigation (protecting, enhancing and expanding natural climate stores) and adaptation (particularly natural flood and overheating measures) • Use nature to deal with residual emissions that the council will have, to ensure that its operations become carbon neutral • Support sustainable farming • Increase focus on nature within the climate and ecology operational group • Refine approach to monitoring nature recovery across the council to increase consistency and clarity, linking this with our new role in county-wide monitoring of the local nature recovery strategy

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Progress on the strategy is reported bi-annually, the most recent [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) had an increased focus on the council’s nature actions (pg. 26-37)

Challenges for future delivery

- Covered in the relevant functions below



Figure 3 Nature-rich highway verge (Credit: Ali Quinney)

2.3. Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> (December 2023 –2025)	<i>Future actions</i> (January 2026 – 2031)
- Facilitated collaborative process to prepare the strategy as responsible authority - Published Dorset's local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) in December 2025	- Carry out the four key functions of the LNRS delivery role: - Lead and convene a delivery partnership - Embed LNRS into local decision making (including internally at Dorset Council) - Identify strategic projects and facilitate project development - Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities - Continue working collaboratively with supporting authorities, BCP Council and Natural England - Work with neighbouring authorities to identify regional nature recovery opportunities, including across the Wessex Partnership region

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Key metrics relating to Nature Recovery Dorset communications and engagement activities can be found in the [Dorset local nature recovery strategy consultation and engagement report](#)
- Approximately 41% of Dorset Council land is in the local habitat map that forms part of the strategy, with approx. 729ha in the 'nature areas of national importance' and approx. 1176ha in the 'high opportunity nature areas' (note: figures are approximate due to some council land being recorded as point/line data which is not comparable to the local habitat map data)
- Note: Dorset Council Pollinators Action Plan 2019 to 2024 outlined the council's commitment to reduce the decline in pollinators and where possible enhance populations. The plan has not been renewed, as it is superseded by Dorset local nature recovery strategy. Actions to support pollinators are still being delivered across relevant functions

Challenges for future delivery

- Funding for the LNRS delivery role from Defra is only being agreed 1 year at a time



Figure 4 Local people and organisations inputting to the local nature recovery strategy at the Local Nature Partnership Annual Forum 2024

2.4. Sustainable Procurement Toolkit

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• A toolkit, policy, training and guidance has been prepared to support better integration of environmental sustainability within Dorset Council’s procurement activity • Based upon reviews of best practice and a survey of DC’s supplier base, this toolkit provides category-specific support on whole lifecycle assessments, supplier questions, tender clauses and KPIs relevant to nature recovery (alongside emissions, adaptation and waste & resources)	• Internal review of the toolkit to work towards adoption in early 2026 • Ongoing work to embed and review the toolkit/policy will become a core element of the Corporate Sustainability Officer role, supported by appropriate upskilling of our green champions network and other internal colleagues

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

2.5. Climate and Nature Decision Wheel

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council has adopted a Decision-Making Wheel, which is a form of climate and nature impact assessment undertaken for any papers going to committees (excluding licensing and planning, transport appeals and staffing committees) • The wheel includes prompts to officers to consider opportunities to increase biodiversity, enhance land management or strengthen habitat connectivity	• To enable biodiversity to be considered and incorporated by more officers and councillors, we are: ○ Reviewing questions to embed nature recovery throughout all sections ○ Make different versions for strategic papers and operational papers ○ Provide an early-stage planning checklist to prompt colleagues of the sorts of questions they’ll need to answer later and provide contacts who can support them

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Between 1st December 2023 and 31st December 2025, 175 proposals completed the climate and nature wheel questionnaire. 47 of the 175 proposals (26.8%) had an impact on land, water or the marine environment. Of those 47 proposals:

- 35 proposals (74.4%) brought land into positive management. Of those, 13 proposals knew the area of land it would bring into positive management and the total was 1521.5 hectares
- 35 proposals (74.4%) aimed to increase biodiversity
- 24 proposals (51.1%) stated that they would reduce habitat fragmentation and provide wildlife corridors
- 21 proposals (44.6%) stated that they would protect the soil from erosion
- 19 proposals stated that chemicals or fertilisers are currently used on the land. Of those, 18 proposals (94.7%) sought to reduce chemical use
- 9 proposals required the use of hazardous substances. All 9 of these proposals (100%) put adequate pollution prevention measures in place
- 23 proposals stated that the land involved was at risk of flooding, of those, 21 proposals (91%) reduced flood risk
- Please note, the findings above are based on the current questions in the wheel. From 2026, the questions are being updated to embed nature recovery throughout all sections of the questionnaire

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

2.6. National Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
● The Natural Environment Team are joint lead with Devon County Council on Natural England’s Pilot Species Conservation Strategy for Hazel Dormice ● The Natural Environment Team are also part of a national group looking at species-specific pilots of Species Conservation Strategies	● Align policies and actions with emerging Protected Sites Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies as these are developed or published ● The Natural Environment Team will continue being part of Species Conservation Strategy pilots and development ● Ongoing conversation with Natural England to restart the preparation of the Jurassic Coast Protected Sites Strategy expected in 2027

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report



Figure 5 Hazel Dormouse

3. Biodiversity across relevant functions

This section shows how biodiversity has been considered and delivered across relevant functions, between December 2023 to December 2025, as well as future actions that are going to be implemented or an aspiration for implementation in the next five years.

3.1. Land and countryside

3.1.1. Greenspace, protected sites and parks

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Dorset Council manages greenspaces and countryside sites in order to conserve and enhance (where possible) their biodiversity e.g. protected sites, parks, nature reserves and SANGs - Several countryside stewardship schemes have been delivered to enhance our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and other actions are taken with partners to improve site condition - Management plans are being prepared for all protected sites, with the largest sites prioritised to have plans first - Collaborative working between countryside/greenspace team and ecologists in the Natural Environment Team as required - Student placements and school & college group sessions have been delivered, providing young people with opportunities to learn about nature and landscape management - Country Park teams work with local farmers/landowners on grazing management, and some town councils to advise on local nature reserves - Work with the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) to log sightings of invasive non-native species. Using the Living Record software helps highways teams target problem sites and enables members of the public to also log sightings	- Continue all existing work as stated for 2023-25 In addition: - Move more of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) from unfavourable to favourable condition - Finalise management plans for all protected sites - Durlston Country Park to continue working with National Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Natural England to get the National Nature Reserve extended along the Purbeck Coast

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The countryside management section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 27 – 28) reports key figures on site management, tree planting, wildflower planting and invasive non-native species removal. The points below provide further detail on habitats, species, site condition and community engagement happening across our greenspaces and countryside sites
- Figure 6 shows a map of Dorset Council's countryside sites, around 70% (630ha) of these countryside sites contain priority habitat (habitats of principal importance)
 - Dorset Council's countryside sites map layer is available to view on [Dorset Explorer](#), along with Natural England's priority habitat layer
 - Dorset Council's countryside sites also feature in the land manager or project proposals layer in [Dorsets' nature recovery maps](#)

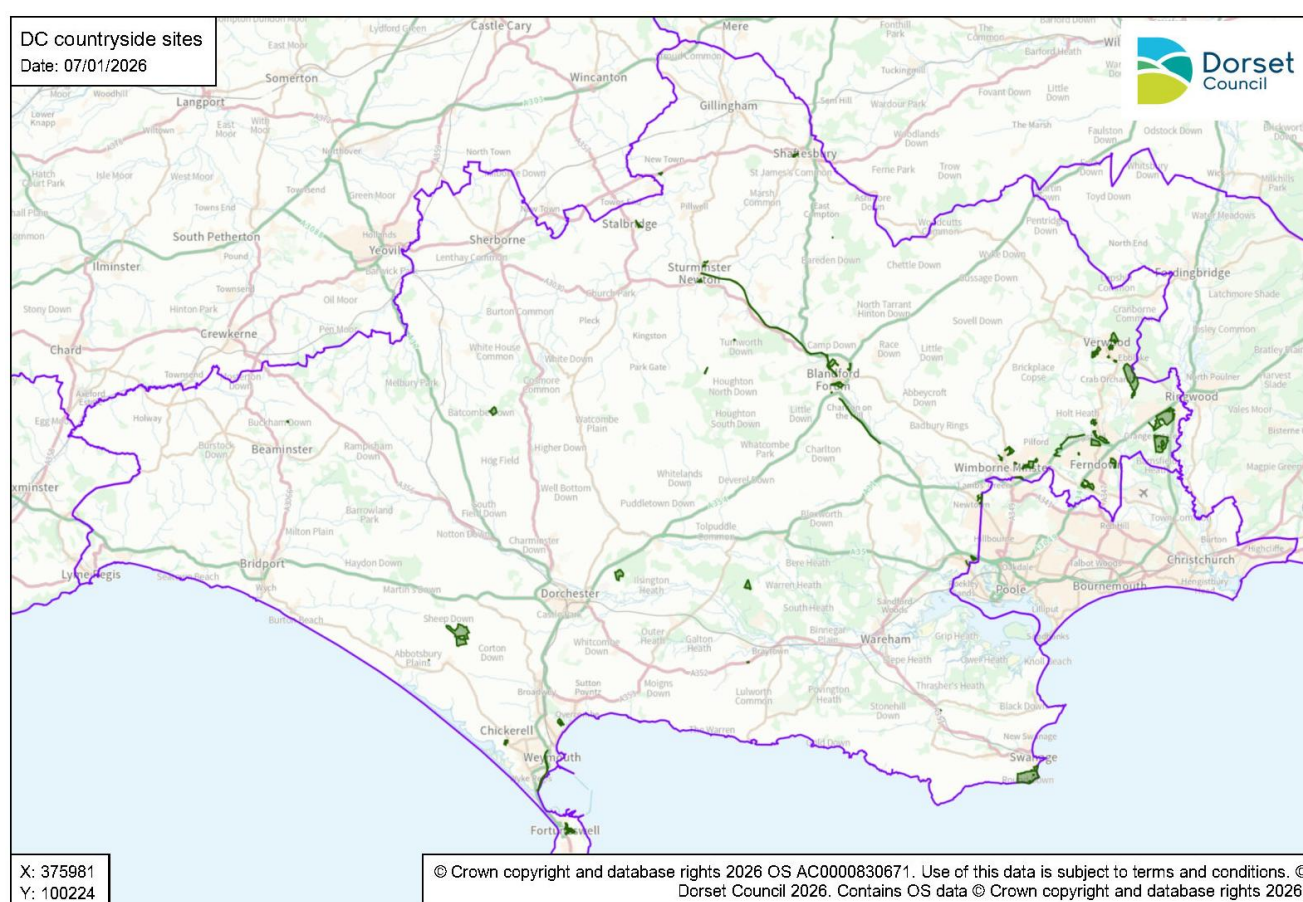


Figure 6 map of Dorset Council countryside sites as shown on Dorset Explorer

- Table 1 summarises the latest condition assessments of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) managed by Dorset Council (see [Appendix A](#) for further detail)

Latest site condition assessment	Number of sites
Favourable	4
Unfavourable recovering	9
Unfavourable no change	1
Unfavourable declining / Part destroyed / Destroyed	0

Table 1 SSSI condition

- 74% of Dorset Council's total sites have a management plan. The remaining sites would benefit from a small financial investment to contract experts to produce long-term management plans to support sites to reach/maintain favourable status
- Dorset Council manages approximately 233ha of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) (also known as Local Wildlife Sites), covering around 2.5% of Dorset Council land and highway extent (note: figures are approximate due to some council land being recorded as point/line data which is not comparable to the local habitat map)
- Table 2 summarises highlights from wildlife surveys across the country parks, many of which are led or supported by local volunteers

Avon Heath Country park	• Increases in breeding bird territories have been recorded since major restoration work began in 2019 to 2024: ○ Dartford Warbler + 164% ○ Nightjar + 131% ○ Woodlark + 86% ○ Stonechat + 86% ○ Tree Pipit + 33%
Durlston Country park	• Increased invertebrate species count by over 600 species in surveys 2023-25, showcased in an exhibition • Glowworm numbers are currently stable • Four butterfly transects are now in place to record butterflies • Steady increase in Guillemot numbers • Cirl buntings arrived for the first time and bred in 2024 and 2025 • Regular bird ringing records show resident and passing species numbers, these are reported to national statistics
Thorncombe Wood and Hardy's Birthplace	• Silver studded blue butterflies recorded on site every year since 2018, other recent butterfly highlights include silver washed fritillary and purple Hairstreak eggs • Moths recorded on site since 2024 include the scarce lobster moth • 69 species of bird between December 2023-25, 5 of those recorded as breeding on site and 15 are red listed species at high risk of extinction • 3 species of bats recorded in 2025 and 5 species in 2023 (Dorset Bat Group have full data since 2015) • 3 juvenile dormice recorded in 2025 and 2023 • 6 reptile records since 2019 • Positive eDNA results for great crested newt in 2025
Moors Valley Country park	• 1219 butterflies recorded in 2024 (14 species) and 1760 butterflies recorded in 2025 (18 species) – with 2025 highlights including Essex skipper, pale clouded yellow, purple hairstreak and small tortoiseshell • 557 dragonflies recorded in 2023 (22 species) and 347 dragonflies recorded in 2024 (12 species) • 284 birds recorded in 2024 (58 species) • 324 birds recorded in 2023 (64 species) • Consistent bird survey numbers since 2012

Table 2 country park wildlife survey highlights

- Durlston meadows were recognised as high quality and chosen to collect and spread seeds in a local land regeneration programme
- Table 3 summarises environmental engagement across Dorset Council's 4 country parks between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 (see [Appendix A](#) for further detail on engagement activities)

Volunteer hours	Formal interactions	Overall visitor interactions
25,056	12,734	138,707

Table 3 country park engagement highlights

Challenges for future delivery

- Possibility of change in central government potentially impacting funding availability
- Controlling regrowth of Pine, Bracken and Birch, along with some Rhododendron and Laurel, is very significant amount of work on recently 'restored' heathland SSSIs. For example, over the 280ha of Avon Heath, it is estimated that around 200ha is heathland, which means every 7 to 10 years the scrub regrowth is required to be removed, equating to 20 to 30 ha required every year - a serious challenge with only 3 to 4 estate staff

3.1.2. Roadside verges

Policies, objectives and actions (December 2023 –2025)	Future actions (January 2026 – 2031)
• Dorset Council roadside verge management balances biodiversity with road safety, and this effective method means many verges now have SNCI status for their biodiversity value • Reduced glyphosate use for managing weed growth on the highway network by 40% since 2024 and carried out alternative weed control trials • Love your verge campaign to highlight ecological value of roadside verges – multi-channel campaign featuring 100 road signs across the county	• Increase the number of our roadside verges that are recognised as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) • Increase nature-friendly verge management across the county (currently 1.2million square meters) • Continue weed control trials and implement results

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The countryside management section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 27 – 28) reports key figures on urban verge management and glyphosate use
- 62% of our urban verges managed to enhance their value for nature. Monitoring of progress against the target for 80% by 2030 is reported on the Council Plan [performance dashboard and progress reports](#)
- Dorset Council's verge management has been shared as best practice with other local authorities e.g. [Plantlife case study](#) and ASPE (Association for Public Service Excellence) seminar

Challenges for future delivery

- Identifying effective weed control alternatives to glyphosate

3.1.3. Rights of Way

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Working with partners to maintain the rights of way network, to support access to the countryside • Dorset Council exercises its legal duty processing applications to change a public right of way and decide whether an order should be issued to make the change • Running the Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Access Forum (DLAF) • Implementing the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)	• Continue performing these regulatory functions • Review, update and implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

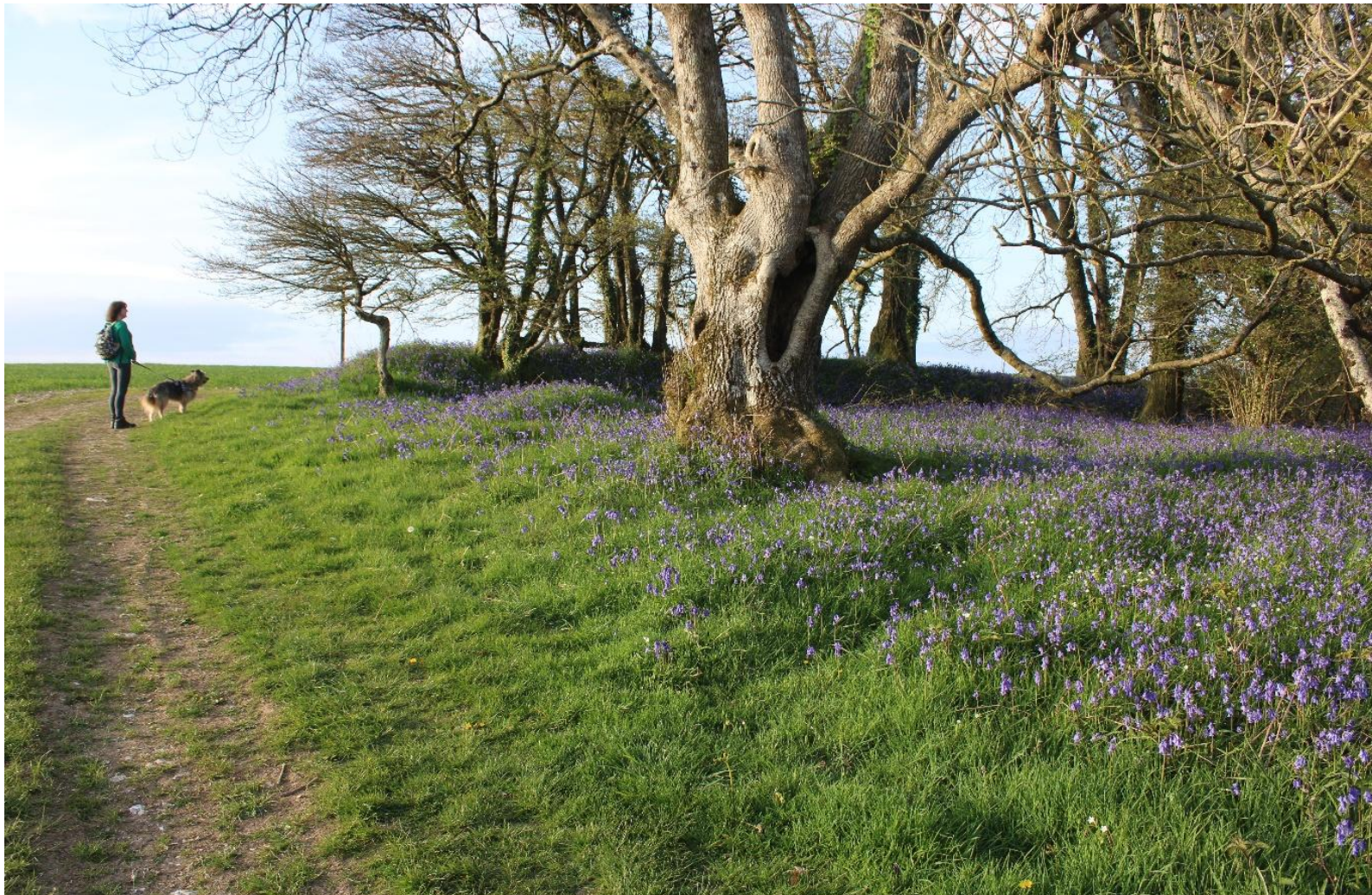
Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The countryside management section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 27 – 28) reports key figures on completed rights of way improvement

Challenges for future delivery

- Resources to implement the actions in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

Figure 7 Dog walker using Right of Way (credit: Steve Wallis)



3.1.4. Grounds and landscape

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council grounds team are involved in maintaining many natural outdoor spaces, such as greenspaces near offices, schools, golf course, parks, sports pitches, playgrounds and amenity spaces • The team also deliver landscape design and build services for enhancement of existing outdoor spaces and on new capital projects • The team aim to deliver spaces that meet the needs of people using them, as well as making space for nature e.g. native pollinator-friendly plants, adding ponds and wildlife areas • The grounds team support schools that would like to create a nature area or forest school, to ensure this is delivered in a sympathetic way • New nature-friendly planting at the County Hall front garden, with plants selected to support birds and pollinators, and a bug house installed. • The team also support delivery of habitat and species enhancements as part of projects to enhance heritage assets on our land	• Continue looking to use least environmentally harmful chemicals e.g. fuels, pesticides, herbicides • Explore options for more naturalised gardens around council buildings that would require less maintenance • Explore options for more wildlife-rich areas / less managed areas in Potten Park and other public open spaces • Continue to develop practices in accordance with industry best practice and guidance

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The Landscape design and maintenance section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 28) reports key figures on work delivered by the landscape and grounds team as part of a range of different projects

Challenges for future delivery

- Funding needed for long-term maintenance of nature areas not just creation
- School budget pressures limiting ability to create more wildlife-friendly areas
- Mainly able to work with local authority schools, less so with academies and other types of school

3.1.5. Trees (arboriculture)

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• The arboriculture team manage and maintain Dorset Council’s stock of over 560,000 trees • The team also respond to emergency tree callouts and carry out checks on trees adjacent to fallen trees • The team use a number of nature-friendly practices where possible, including: ○ Leaving habitat poles instead of simply felling and removing trees ○ Leave old tree pollards to enable regrowth and maintain invertebrate habitat ○ Cut tree branches to a jagged end, to perform similar function as a veteran tree ○ Leave felled trees as deadwood/dead hedging to continue providing resource for invertebrates and other wildlife • The team also carry out tree planting	• Explore possible additional locations needed for tree planting to deliver the 2 for 1 policy • Continue to develop practices in accordance with industry best practice and guidance, including additional biodiversity enhancements as part of tree management

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The trees section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 28-30) reports key figures on work delivered by the arboriculture team

Challenges for future delivery

- Finding a balance between trees and wildflowers on highway verges, both provide important habitat

Figure 8 Rawlsbury and Nettlecombe (credit: Steve Wallis)



3.2. Property and assets

3.2.1. County Farms

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Published a Farms Estate Strategy. - The Natural Environment Team works with the council farm estate team to deliver projects to enhance the ecological value of our farms. Projects include Barn Owl Boxes, Great Crested Newt Ponds and baseline biodiversity Surveys - Council Plan sets a target for 70% of Council Farms will be managed using sustainable farming practices that balance food production and nature by 2030 - Pilot study commenced on Clapcott's Farm, Spetisbury to show the potential for delivery of BNG at council farms	- Dorset Council will actively encourage tenants to engage with Environmental Improvement Grant Schemes, for example by: - providing additional adjoining land - sharing knowledge and good practice around sustainable farming practices between tenants - If the pilot study on potential BNG delivery yields positive results, consider investigating other opportunities across the Farms Estate and working with tenants to deliver BNG

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 25% of county farms and farmland only assets are currently delivering sustainable farming as part of a countryside stewardship agreement or sustainable farming incentive. Monitoring against the target for 70% is reported on the Council Plan [performance dashboard and in progress reports](#)

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.2.2. Asset policies, management and review

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Community asset transfer policy enables consideration of whether an asset could better be managed locally to benefit the community, the decision-making includes environmental impacts - The strategic asset management plan includes a commitment to make changes to buildings that benefit the environment e.g. net zero	- Continue implementing these policies and plans - Continue the strategic asset review, considering options for possible sites to deliver BNG, SANGs etc

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.2.3. Capital projects

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• The Capital Projects Design and Delivery Team seek to include biodiversity enhancements as part of new build projects and schemes. For example, wildlife-friendly gardens in new school grounds and care homes with native planting for pollinators and boxes for birds or bats • Input is sought from ecologists in the Natural Environment Team where required • Wildlife enhancements are then maintained by the authority long-term	• Continue delivering wildlife enhancements and BNG as part of capital projects • More fully integrate climate and nature decision wheel into capital project development process

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The project delivery and operations section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) reports key figures on work delivered as part of capital projects, either by the landscape and grounds team (pg 29) or external contractors (30). Some highlights include:
- 33% biodiversity net gain being created on-site in the construction of the new Blandford Waste Management Centre, secured for 30 years by the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
 - Habitats include native woodland, hedgerows, wildflower grassland, wetland, ponds, understorey shrubs, and trees
 - Habitats have been designed to provide connection across the ecological network and local provenance seeds and plants will be used
 - Further enhancements include hedgerows managed to provide bat corridors, installing bat, bird and dormouse boxes, and creating loggeries from any tree felling
- Transforming an old car park and hardstanding into a wildlife-friendly space for residents at Chestnut House, a new young people's care home and care leavers accommodation. This includes
 - Native hedgerows, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, fruiting plants, herbs, pollinating plants, fruit trees and wildflower seeding
 - Sustainable drainage to return rainwater to the ground instead of into sewers
- Outdoor spaces that support nature while also giving students opportunities for growing, outdoor learning and recreation, in new and existing schools and inclusion hubs, including:
 - Native planting including fruit trees, berry patches, wildflowers, sensory plants, trees

- Raised planters for growing and nurturing plants to encourage wildlife, pollinators and birds
- Edible kitchen gardens to grow herbs, fruit and vegetables
- Forest schools
- Pond creation
- Sensitive lighting to support dark skies
- Wildlife bricks and boxes for birds, bats and insects

Challenges for future delivery

- Budgets available for new capital projects

3.3. Highways and transport

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
● The Highways teams work with the natural environment team to identify ways to avoid harm to species and habitats, mitigate for any biodiversity loss and deliver wildlife enhancements as part of delivering highway improvements or new active travel routes ● Dorset Council verge management balances biodiversity with road safety, and this effective method means many verges now have SNCI status for their biodiversity value ● Ecological advice is provided for individual schemes and wider opportunities to incorporate biodiversity enhancements, such as avoiding soil importation, using low-fertility soils, and integrating built-in features for bats and birds on bridges ● Habitat Regulations Assessment and SSSI assent applications are undertaken when required ● New street lighting policy to support dark skies for wildlife ● Draft Local Transport Plan includes Policy A4 on nature-positive design	● Finalise Local Transport Plan 2026-2041 ● Work with developers to deliver good practice when constructing roads for new housing developments. This includes specifying low nutrient verges to support wildflowers, tree crates to help trees grow without damaging nearby structures and street lighting designs that protect bat flightpaths

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.4. Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) team have a role in managing flood risk, coastal risk and wastewater, alongside a number of external partners • All FCERM schemes apply standing advice on best practice for pollution prevention, invasive non-native species and ecological mitigation • Input is sought from DC ecologists as required. For major schemes an ecologist attends steering groups providing advice • External ecological surveys are contracted as required • Advice is sought from Natural England as required e.g. developing mitigation measures to support seagrass restoration • Working with the Marine Maritime Organisation as required • Habitat Regulations Assessment and SSSI assent applications undertaken • Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is complied with on all relevant projects • Small wastewater assets are maintained and upgraded to reduce water pollution • Delivering the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy includes identifying flood mitigation options for high risk areas • As a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Dorset Council assesses Land Drainage Consent applications to ensure biodiversity interests are considered • The LLFA is a Statutory Planning Consultee for major development to ensure that surface water flood risk is appropriately managed and biodiversity interests are included via the promotion of Sustainable Drainage Systems	• Develop a FCERM BNG protocol, to be agreed by the Natural Environment Team • Explore possible options to install ecological enhancements on wastewater compounds • Exploring additional opportunities and funding from Defra for natural flood management • Continue performing regulatory functions for land drainage consenting and planning consultations

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- One FCERM scheme involved delaying essential harbour wall repair and replacement works to give [seahorses time to breed and raise their young](#). Following the works there is a plan to [restore and increase the area of seagrass](#) and monitor this over several years

Challenges for future delivery

- The FCERM team have a preference to continue using internal ecologists and environmental advice, but this depends on the capacity of other teams and the capital pipeline

3.5. Planning

3.5.1 Planning policy

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Adopted Local Plans, alongside Neighbourhood Plans set the basis for decisions on planning applications. Strategic Priorities and Policies are developed locally to reflect national policy and local objectives • There are four adopted Local Plans across Dorset that were prepared and adopted by the former Local Authorities that make up Dorset Council. In addition, the Waste and Minerals plans were adopted by Dorset County Council. There are numerous Neighbourhood Plans in effect across Dorset that include local, non-strategic policies • The adopted Local Plans all have policies that address biodiversity loss where development takes place however, these are inconsistent and largely out of date given changes in national policy and legislation. Neighbourhood Plans add a further level of detail that creates additional complexity	• Preparation of the new Dorset Council Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider what policies and approaches are needed to protect biodiversity and support nature recovery, reflecting national policy and legislation • Consider the implications of legislative requirements and national policy for the Local Plan • Develop approaches to suggest for inclusion in Neighbourhood Plans to give a degree of consistency • Develop the Dorset Design Code to raise design standards of future development, including how nature is considered in designs to create greenspaces that benefit communities and use Dorset’s natural resources wisely

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The [Authority Monitoring Report \(April 2023 - March 2024\)](#) evaluates the effectiveness of the Local Plan policies across the board, including environment (pg27-33)

Challenges for future delivery

- National Policy is currently very fluid making it very difficult to progress with the Local Plan. This is slowing down production considerably

3.5.2. Development management

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Planning applications determined in accordance with current wildlife legislation and policy (local and national) • Natural Environment Team ecologists provide technical advice and operate the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol to integrate biodiversity in the planning system. It is designed to: ○ meet Natural England’s Protected Species Standing Advice ○ address the mitigation hierarchy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ○ audit and review ecological information submitted with planning applications ○ ensure impacts on biodiversity are addressed ○ provide technical guidance to applicants or their ecological consultants • Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been embedded within the planning system as this became mandatory in 2024 • The development of a local BNG market has been supported by running a call for sites, registering potential sites for delivery of BNG and nutrient mitigation	• Continue regular reviews and annual updates of the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol in line with relevant emerging legislation and policy • Continue to ensure that decisions are taken in line with national planning policies and local policies to conserve and enhance biodiversity • Continue to promote best practice through officer training and agents forums • Continue to ensure that Habitats Regulations requirements are met through planning decisions • Implement BNG monitoring software so that monitoring and reporting can start (expected for 1st April 2026) • Regularly check and review effectiveness of BNG monitoring, and of the software module • Embed the local nature recovery strategy into decision-making as a new tool to inform sustainable development, this will inform BNG strategic significance and possibly be a material consideration

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 961 Certificates of Approval issued to planning applications going through the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol (DBAP) between December 2023 – December 2025
- We are currently unable to provide all the required information to report on BNG because we need to complete a planning software update. The BNG monitoring module is being set up and tested, but has not been fully implemented

Challenges for future delivery

- Implementation and roll out of the new BNG monitoring software needs to be fitted into a schedule of competing priorities and dependencies, including other planning system statutory changes. This makes resourcing and time-allocation difficult
- Potential national changes to BNG requirements could require changes to current processes

3.5.3. Conservation

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Hedgerow Removal Notices must be submitted by landowners, Dorset Council then considers if the hedge is ‘important’ under the regulations and if a retention notice should be issued, to help address widespread loss of hedgerows in the countryside • Dorset Council can serve TPOs to prohibit the damage or destruction of specific trees without consent from the council, to help protect trees that are a of amenity importance and may also be a key element of local biodiversity. TPOs can also be used to protect groups of trees or woodlands	• Continue performing these regulatory functions

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

Figure 9 Fungi (credit: Ali Quinney)



important habitats and species, to comply with legislation • Mitigation includes: ○ Nutrient neutrality ○ Air quality on Dorset Heathlands ○ Recreational disturbance in Poole Harbour and Chesil and Fleet ○ Heathland infrastructure projects • Actions are delivered to avoid or mitigate harm, but wherever possible achieve additional benefits for biodiversity wherever possible e.g Sutable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) have a primary purpose to reduce recreational disturbance on heathlands, but it is encouraged that designs include nature-rich areas of planting • The following strategies and supplementary planning documents guide this mitigation work: ○ Chesil and Fleet interim strategy 2020 ○ Poole Harbour Recreation 2019-2024 ○ Dorset Heathlands Interim Air Quality Strategy 2020 to 2025 ○ The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 ○ Nitrogen Reduction Mitigation in Poole Harbour Catchment	○ Prioritise investment in opportunities working with farmers/landowners where commitment to 80 years land use change is possible ○ Explore potential partnership with the Wareham Arc Landscape Recovery Scheme • Air quality on Dorset Heathlands: ○ Continue to collect botanical and air quality data from heathland sites to monitor changes in air quality in relation to traffic pollution levels ○ Develop and deliver air quality mitigation projects to counteract air pollution from vehicles within 200 metres of a road e.g. removing vegetation, stripping away nutrient enriched soil and focussed grazing ○ Develop and deliver school activities • Recreational disturbance in Poole Harbour and Chesil and Fleet: ○ Develop and deliver infrastructure improvement projects e.g. footpath improvements and viewpoint creation ○ Continue to deliver engagement and awareness raising across sites • Heathland infrastructure projects: ○ Maintain ongoing review and ensure effective implementation of the Heathland SPD (2020–2025) and any subsequent guidance or policy updates ○ Collaborate with developers and partners to ensure the successful delivery of agreed projects and proactively identify new opportunities ○ Work in partnership on nature recovery projects ○ Enhance and strengthen the green infrastructure network through targeted improvements
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Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Nitrogen mitigation delivery has supported:
 - Land to be temporarily fallow which has wildlife benefits
 - Stopping high chemical inputs on the land
 - New nature reserves or increased size of existing nature reserves

- Permanent opportunities for environmental charities to manage new habitats, support species, improve hydrology, improve water quality, encourage access and education for local people
- Monitoring via S106 agreements and through Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund reporting and governance
- The environmental mitigation section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) reports the hectares of land delivering nutrient mitigation and nature recovery, since that report an additional 40 hectares has been added.
- Air quality mitigation:
 - Air quality monitoring at 13 sites situated within 200m of main road on a range of Dorset heathland SAC and SPA sites identified that all 13 sample sites had ammonia levels above 1ug/m3 (the critical level above which lichen and bryophyte populations can be damaged)
 - None exceeded the critical level for nitrogen dioxide however results showed that the roadside traffic emissions are high enough to contribute towards nitrogen deposition at all sites
 - Correlation between air sampling and vegetation surveys has identified 8 medium to high priority sites where critical loads for nitrogen deposition are being exceeded and road traffic pollution is a significant pollution source. 5 of these sites are the focus for the first mitigation projects (Avon Heath, Matcham's View, Canford Heath, Upton Heath and Ferndown Common) where activities such as vegetation removal and soil scraping will take place to make them more resilient to future nitrogen-based air pollution
 - The 2025 air quality monitoring programme has continued with the collection of baseline data at 14 new heathland sites and will contribute to the creation of a road traffic emissions risk rating for Dorset Heathlands
- Impacts of the recreation mitigation delivery can be found in the
 - Poole Harbour Recreation Mitigation [Annual Delivery Report 2023-2024](#) and [Annual Delivery Report 2024-2025](#)
 - Chesil and the fleet Mitigation [Annual Delivery Report 2023-2024](#) and [Annual Delivery Report 2024-2025](#)
- Heathland infrastructure initiatives have supported:
 - Strategic land-use change
 - Enduring nature-positive outcomes through the creation and enhancement of greenspaces, including rewilding opportunities
 - Inclusive public access alongside environmental education
 - 3 SANG sites signed off as practically complete and open to the public in this reporting period
 - Monitoring via planning agreements
 - The environmental mitigation section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) reports the hectares on SANGs with a nature-friendly management plan

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.7. Dorset Heaths Partnership

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Heaths Partnership delivers recreation mitigation allowing DC and BCP Councils to meet Habitat Regulations contributing to the mitigation of harm from new housing and tourism development on the Dorset Heathlands. This is achieved through the delivery of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) across the Dorset Heathlands • This work includes education, wardening, the Dorset Dogs project, and ongoing monitoring, all aimed at raising awareness of heathland habitats and encouraging both local communities and visitors to enjoy, respect and protect the Dorset heathlands	• Continue to deliver engagement and awareness raising across Dorset Heathlands

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- [Annual Delivery Reports](#) and [Annual Monitoring Reports](#) track public engagement, wardening activity, visitor use and pressure on the heathlands, as well as habitat and species data. This monitoring provides the evidence base for assessing the effectiveness of mitigation measures and guiding future management of Dorset's heathlands

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report



Figure 10 Dartford Warbler
(credit: Susan Buckland)

3.8. Dorset Coast Forum

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> (December 2023 –2025)	<i>Future actions</i> (January 2026 – 2031)
- Dorset Coast Forum work with communities to protect, enhance and promote Dorset’s coast and surrounding seas - Example actions supporting biodiversity 2023-25 include: - Studland Bay eco-moorings and seagrass habitat protection project - Creation of Peveril Point & Downs local nature reserve in Swanage - Exploring emerging opportunities around marine nature recovery	- Development and creation of Marine Local Recovery Strategy - Engaging with communities regarding the creation of saltmarsh at Moors at Arne - Increased focus on ocean and coastal literacy - Connecting young people to the coast through outdoor classroom days - Continued working with communities to protect, enhance and promote our coast and surrounding seas

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- A dedicated partnership has been formed to protect and restore seagrass habitats. As part of this work, 87 eco-moorings have been funded and installed, supporting increased seahorse sightings and early signs of seagrass recovery
- Peveril Point & Downs Local Nature Reserve supports over 300 plant species and 100 animal species. New interpretative signage installed

Challenges for future delivery

- Having enough funding in place to cover staff, overhead and other costs
- Risk of Dorset Coast Forum no longer being hosted by Dorset Council
- Having the necessary support from key partners – success cannot be achieved by Dorset Coast Forum alone
- Lack of interest by communities leading to reduction in engagement
- Climate change impacts on marine nature recovery outweighing support provided through strategy



Figure 11 Dorset Coast Forum team at East Beach

3.9. Litter Free Dorset

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Litter Free Dorset campaign to reduce litter and waste as well as improve water quality across Dorset • Example actions supporting biodiversity 2023-25 include: ○ A ‘nature recovery’ category was added to the Sustainable Business Network award scheme in 2024 to support all types of businesses to take actions supporting nature ○ The reconnecting with nature spaces project delivered three community gardens to reconnect residents with nature: St John’s Garden in Weymouth, the Thyme Out Community Garden in Portland and the Queen Mother Garden in Shaftesbury	• Continue delivering current and new projects relating to litter, waste and water quality, supporting biodiversity through these projects wherever possible

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The Sustainable Business Network now has 214 member businesses across Dorset, each at different stages of their sustainability journey. In 2024, with the introduction of the Nature Recovery category, 55 businesses achieved the SBN Nature Recovery Award in recognition of the actions they have taken to support biodiversity and nature recovery
- The 35th Great Dorset Beach Clean in 2024 was the biggest event yet; over one week, 297 volunteers came together to clean 15 beaches, removing 327kg of rubbish
- Water quality campaigns in Bournemouth and Weymouth have communicated campaign messaging to over 25,000 households, encouraging residents to take simple actions to protect their local rivers and the sea

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

Figure 12 Sustainable Business Network nature recovery awards and actions



3.10. Communications

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council uses a range of methods to raise awareness of our own actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and promote opportunities for others including: • Launch of the Nature Recovery Dorset network to celebrate and encourage local action for nature • Let Grass Grow campaign – encouraging Dorset residents to let their lawns and grow • Green libraries week nature-based activities • Resident newsletters (including Residents' News, Climate & Nature Bulletin, and Enjoying Dorset's countryside) highlighting council activities and encouraging residents to get involved • Video storytelling demonstrating the importance of nature for health and wellbeing • Press releases issued to regional media e.g. heathland restoration project • Webpages on the Climate and Ecological Emergency and Countryside, coast and parks • Species and habitat advice notes and guidance sheets • Tree management guidance and Tree Planting Checklist for the public, businesses and community groups • Green champions employee network to engage staff in climate and nature knowledge sharing and action. • Support embedding action across council services • Town and Parish Council climate and nature network to facilitate working together, sharing and disseminating best practice • Town and Parish Council webinars and newsletters • Established Dorset Citizens' Climate Panel to seek resident views on Dorset's approach to climate resilience	• Continue communications activities to support the delivery of the council plan priority to respond to the climate and nature crisis • Develop specific campaigns to support nature recovery and grow membership of the Nature Recovery Dorset network • Establish regular workshops webinar series and toolkit for Town and Parish Council Climate and Nature Network • Expand internal green champions network and related work programme and resources • Expand on-line staff climate training modules to include resilience and nature • Take forward the Dorset Citizens' Climate Panel recommendations in the development of a county-wide Climate Adaptation Strategy. Build on key themes identified by the panel - nature, land and water – and ensure engagement with a range of internal and external stakeholders

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 299 members of the Nature Recovery Dorset network so far
- Communications and engagement activities have contributed to increased public awareness and participation in biodiversity initiatives, as evidenced by campaign reach, engagement rates, and stakeholder feedback
- Evaluation approach:
 - Campaign-level reviews: each major campaign (e.g., *Love Your Verge*, *Let Grass Grow*) undergoes post-delivery evaluation to assess effectiveness, audience reach, and lessons learned for future improvements
 - Stakeholder feedback: Surveys and feedback sessions with Town & Parish Councils, staff, and residents inform ongoing strategy refinement
- Monitoring metrics:
 - Digital engagement: Social media reach, impressions, engagement rates; website traffic and unique page views; e-newsletter open and click-through rates
 - Media coverage: Volume and sentiment analysis of press coverage
 - Content performance: Video views, average watch duration, and shares
 - Participation indicators: Attendance at events and webinars; number of resources downloaded; sign-ups to Nature Recovery Dorset network
 - Network engagement: Evaluation of Nature Recovery Dorset network and Citizens' Climate Panel recommendations feeding into strategic planning
- Continuous improvement: Insights from monitoring and evaluation are used to adapt messaging, channels, and formats to maximise impact and align with Dorset Council's climate and nature priorities

Challenges for future delivery

- Resource constraints: Limited staff capacity and budget may restrict the ability to scale campaigns or deliver new engagement activities
- Stakeholder engagement: Maintaining momentum and active participation from Town & Parish Councils, residents, and internal networks will require ongoing engagement
- Digital reach limitations: Reliance on online channels may exclude audiences with limited digital access or skills
- Public perception and behaviour change: Achieving sustained behaviour change (e.g., letting grass grow, supporting verge management) can be slow and requires ongoing reinforcement
- External factors: Policy changes, environmental incidents, or negative media coverage could impact messaging and engagement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation capacity: Ensuring robust data collection and analysis for impact measurement may be difficult without dedicated resource

3.11. Children and education

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Youth nature activities shared via education providers, libraries, and youth voice social media channel (including poster competitions, activity booklets and resource sharing) - Launched Dorset Climate Ambassadors programme in partnership with the MET Office and Department for Education – to support Dorset schools to reduce carbon emissions and boost biodiversity, including taking part in the National Nature Education Park. This includes recruiting more volunteers to help education settings work through the programme - Education Challenge Leads (ECLs) are all trained as Climate Ambassadors. They can provide bespoke support to schools, alongside our Southwest Climate Ambassador team, to achieve the Department for Education’s Climate Action Plan initiative. The next training for Dorset schools is 16th January. - Established internal network of officers working in schools on environmental topics e.g. giving assemblies or delivering lessons, lectures, webinars, competitions or campaigns - Working with UK100 and other South West councils to bid for lottery funding to support youth engagement in climate and nature	- Expand climate ambassadors’ schools and volunteer network - Work with topic specialists to develop lesson packs - Increase engagement with school governors - Host a conference in Q3 for schools and climate ambassadors - Continue internal network of officers working in schools on environmental topics

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 85 Dorset schools and colleges engaged in the climate ambassador programme
- 30 Climate Ambassador volunteers signed up and trained
- 200 students took part in beach clean activities as part of the climate ambassador programme

Challenges for future delivery

- Limitations in capacity of education settings to fit climate and nature education and activities alongside other curriculum and pastoral responsibilities, and limited capacity of Dorset Council officers to support all schools in the county. Therefore, a focus is placed on volunteer

recruitment, internal networking of council officers, and sharing of curriculum matched resources for schools to use

3.12. Housing and adults

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• As part of refurbishing West Farm House, a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), a qualified ecologist was appointed to survey, report on, and oversee significant roof and external façade works to protect the bat species using the building. The project also incorporated ecologist-approved features in the roof soffits and ridges to support future nesting • The adults’ social care team commissions nature-based day opportunities—such as gardening and land management—for older adults and those with complex needs, helping residents connect with nature, learn new skills, and support biodiversity through nature-friendly land management • The Inclusive Housing Design Guide for Extra Care Housing includes guidance on biodiversity enhancements and nature-connection features, such as bird boxes and pollinator planting. At St Martins House in Gillingham, a wild garden area has been set aside to “allow nature to be nature”	• The Supported Living Design Guide (scheduled for publication in 2026) will include requirements for biodiversity enhancements, such as creating wildlife-friendly areas, providing space for raised planters to support growing activities, and designing gardens with year-round greenery, colour and scent

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

Figure 13 Pollinator friendly planting (credit: Steve Wallis)



3.13. Public Health

Policies, objectives and actions <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	Future actions <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Mapped access to nature to identify communities where people are less likely to live with nature nearby (2 hectares plus within 300 metres walk) • Working with partners to promote nature-based health interventions	• Internal collaboration to ensure measures to increase access to nature are embedded in policy and decision making to support moving more, social connection and wellbeing e.g. design of new housing • Promote Nature Nearby mapping to internal stakeholders to support activity by other Directorates e.g. funding bids, policy development • Continue working with system partners to promote nature-based health interventions that support physical activity/moving more, social connection and wellbeing e.g. other Dorset Council Directorates, NHS partners, Voluntary Community Sector

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Nature nearby mapping was used to inform the local nature recovery strategy map to deliver co-benefits for people as well as biodiversity
- Figure 14 shows one of the map layers created as part of the Nature Nearby mapping. Map layers are available to view on [Dorset Explorer](#), find out more about the data and method in the [Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps](#)

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

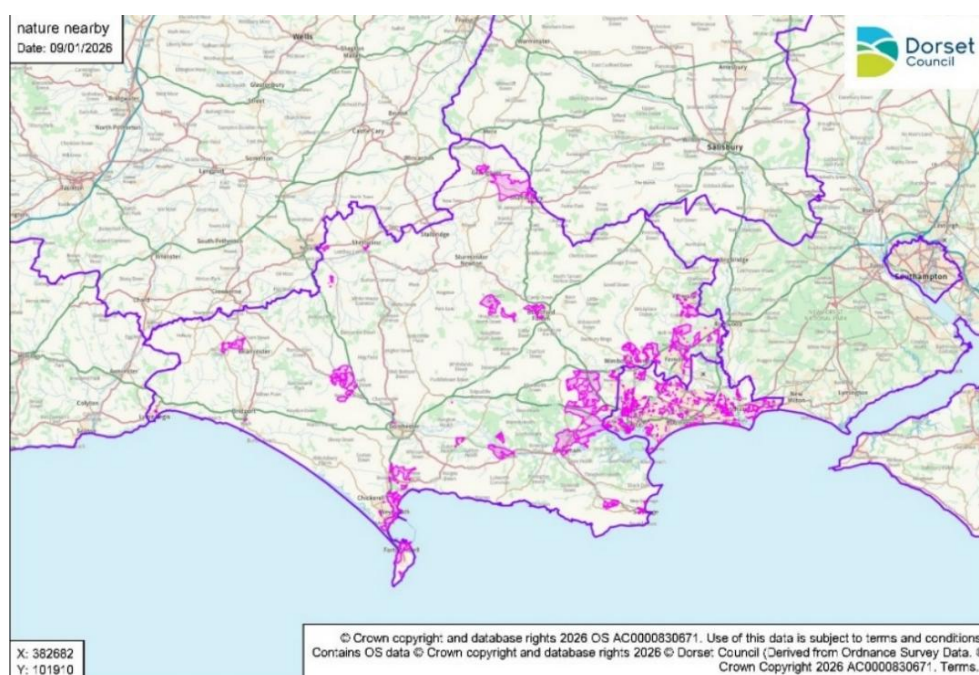


Figure 14 Map showing priority areas for increasing nature nearby - where the modelling estimates that 30% or less of the population in them live with 'nature nearby' (within 300 metres walk of nature-rich space)

3.14. Environmental Protection

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> (December 2023 –2025)	<i>Future actions</i> (January 2026 – 2031)
• Protecting human health through the pollution control regulatory functions, with a net positive impact on environmental biodiversity and sustainability • Published the Contaminated Land Strategy that outlines the management/remediation of potentially contaminated land • Permitting process – ensuring certain industrial emissions are regulated • Launched a Better Burn Campaign to reduce the level of particulates emitted from domestic solid fuel burning • Enacting and enforcing a dog related Public Spaces Protection Order to reduce the incidents of dog fouling and contamination on the ground	• Continue to carry out statutory obligations, delivering advice, guidance and campaigns

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Continuous monitoring of air quality to ensure specific contaminants do not exceed allowed levels
- Sampling and risk assessing private water supplies to ensure water quality is wholesome and potable

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

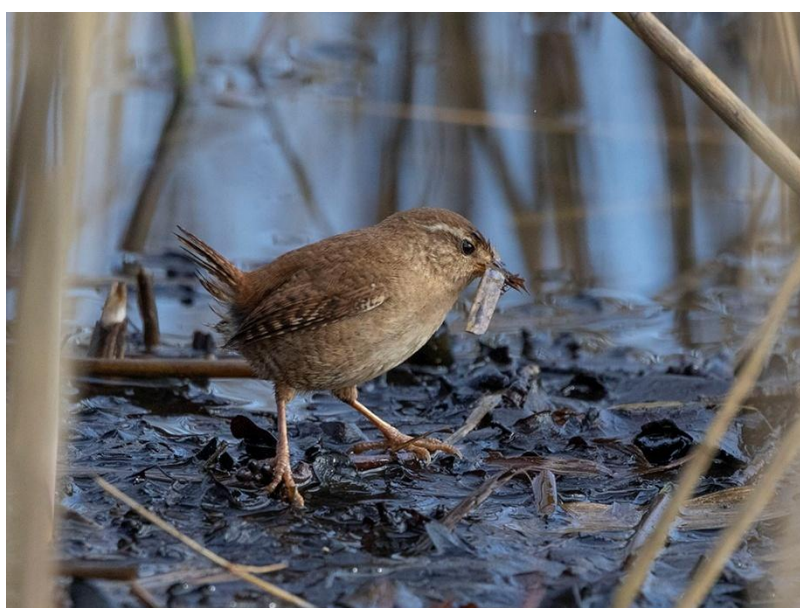


Figure 15 Wren at Lodmoor (credit: Susan Buckland)

3.15. Waste

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Undertaken a review and adoption of a Dorset Council Waste Strategy 2024 and began implementing the associated action plans • Continued to prioritise waste reduction and recycling, which in turn protects ecosystems from pollution and reduces extraction of natural resources • Treat waste close to source of collection where possible e.g. use of local Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility for residual waste	• Continue to implement the revised Dorset Council Waste Strategy 2024 and associated action plans • Undertake two major tenders—the Resource, Management and Transport Contract and the Residual Waste Treatment Contract— with a view to working with successful bidders to introduce some measures for biodiversity (e.g., green roofs, onsite habitats, bird boxes, pollinator plants etc) , reducing environmental impacts by minimising ‘waste miles’ and exploring the use of alternative fuels within the transport elements of the contracts • Continue to drive forward infrastructure improvements that will enhance biodiversity where new sites are developed including sustainable planting and wildlife ponds as well as a rainwater harvesting system • Complete the development of the new Blandford waste management centre to include planting and pond creation • Continue to manage historical closed landfill sites and pursue ecological improvements where possible

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Recycling rate 60.5% (2023/24) – highest performing unitary authority in England.
- Residual household waste per household – 363 kg/hh – very low level
- Percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill – 0.5%

Challenges for future delivery

- Insufficient financial and people resources to enable actions to be implemented
- Legislative changes
- Lack of participation in recycling and waste schemes from residents and businesses

3.16. Economic Growth and Regeneration

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> (December 2023 –2025)	<i>Future actions</i> (January 2026 – 2031)
- Supporting eco-tourism and nature-based visitor economy initiatives, promoting Dorset’s natural assets sustainably, through Visit Dorset, Dorset’s official destination management organisation Nature and Wildlife in Dorset Visit Dorset - Businesses looking to develop or extend buildings are encouraged to work with Planning and Natural Environment colleagues to meet biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality and protected species ambitions	- Continue advising businesses to follow best practice on supporting biodiversity and the natural environment - Continue promoting the Sustainable Business Network and Award to businesses we work with

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report



Figure 16 Comma Butterfly at Morton (credit: Susan Buckland)

3.17. Protected Landscapes

3.17.1 Dorset National Landscape

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• As host to Dorset National Landscape (DNL) partnership, Dorset Council supports the partnership to deliver work that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the landscape • The DNL team has a key convening role for the landscape, including: ○ Dorset Downs Conservation Forum ○ West Dorset Rivers & Streams catchment ○ Wild Purbeck Forum, including convening partners around the opportunity for a new ‘super’ National Nature Reserve • The DNL team supports access to nature and the landscape through its projects Stepping into Nature, Nature Buddies, FLAVOURS and Nature Calling, and makes investments with a Defra-origin capital fund for Access for All • Dorset National Landscape’s Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FIPL) supports farm clusters and knowledge exchange programmes facilitating changes towards more regenerative and nature-friendly practice. It has also supported significant areas of survey for biodiversity baselines • An additional capital fund was made available in FY25-26 to further the national 30x30 aims; relevant investments have been made • A new statutory National Landscape management plan for 2026-2031 has been adopted by the Partnership with strong policies for nature	• Funding is secure for Nature Buddies until September 2026 to continue to develop a network of volunteers to support green social prescribing • Other future actions are highly funding dependent; the DNL Partnership has not received notice of its allocation for this Spending Review period. However, ambitions include: ○ Continue supporting uptake and adoption of regenerative farming ○ Continue to coordinate and deliver action on EIP targets apportioned through the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework. ○ Continue to support nature-focussed partnerships ○ Develop a Landscape Connections programme for support by National Lottery Heritage Fund ○ Lead a Landscape Recovery round 3 bid for the Isle of Purbeck

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The hosted partnership section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 33-34) reports key figures on investment in nature recovery projects by Dorset National Landscape,

as well as tree planting, hedgerow planting, wildflower planting, wetland creation, invasive and non-native species removal and natural flood management

- 959 people from ethnically diverse communities joined in supported countryside visits with the [FLAVOURS](#) project (371 in spring/summer '25)
- 201 people (from target underserved communities in Yeovil) engaged directly with the Cerne Abbas Giant and its environment through the [Nature Calling](#) project
- 40 [Nature Buddy volunteers](#) recruited to help support people's access to nature for green social prescribing
- 417 school children received in-school sessions on trees and climate change and an outdoor tree planting session, as part of The West Dorset Trees schools project (supported by the [Dorset Community Tree Fund](#))

Challenges for future delivery

- Funding is a challenge; National Landscape team core revenue funding is effectively 65% of what it was in 2012, yet the expectations and demand for delivery are at the highest ever
- Culture clashes (food vs nature / nature vs development) within the local and national community have a bearing on the ability to deliver, whether that is through policy or funding priorities, or simply absorbing time that could be directed to delivery

Figure 17 Thrift at Ferrybridge (credit: Ali Quinney)



3.17.2. Cranborne Chase National Landscape

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• As a host to Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) partnership, Dorset Council supports the partnership to deliver work that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the landscape • The CCNL team managed the Chase and Chalke partnership between 2020-2025, delivering 20 distinct projects focussed around natural, historic and cultural landscapes • The CCNL team delivered the Management Plan 2019-2024 which directly supported the recovery of biodiversity by guiding the restoration and creation of wildlife-rich habitats and enhancing ecological connectivity and resilience through collaboration with farmers, landowners, and communities at a landscape scale • Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) Partnership Plan 2025-2030 was published in December 2025 with a stated ambition that the National Landscape will be a place where habitats are restored, expanded, created and connected allowing wildlife to thrive and move freely across the area • CCNL published Tree Planting Guidance in 2025 which aims to enhance biodiversity and support nature recovery by encouraging the planting and management of woodland using the Right Tree Right Place principle • The CCNL team continued to facilitate the National Landscapes International Dark Sky Reserve status – with all host Local Authorities now committed to complying with the designation and reducing light pollution through the planning process • £260k of funding was allocated for projects in Dorset through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme between December 23-25	• Deliver the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025-2030 • Deliver the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan 2025-2030 which includes target-driven plans to support ambitions within the Environment Act 2021, the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025 and the National Landscapes ‘Colchester Declaration’ • Align delivery with Dorset’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to ensure a coordinated approach to regional priorities • Continue to promote and facilitate a net reduction in light pollution to maintain CCNL status as an International Dark Sky Reserve • Develop a funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Landscape Connections scheme which if successful will enable delivery of a series of large-scale and impactful land management actions and activities that will enhance biodiversity • Secure NLHF funding for Wild About Cranborne Chase community engagement project • Deliver the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme March 2026-2029, focussing on enabling projects that delivery positive outcomes for people, nature, climate and place

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The hosted partnership section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 34) reports key figures on investment in nature recovery projects by Cranborne Chase National Landscape in the Dorset Council area
- Through the Chase and Chalke Landscape Partnership volunteers and landowners were trained in biodiversity monitoring, woodland management and surveying, hedge laying and practical land conservation management activities. The partnership also delivered a Forest School Programme, the introduction of grazing on a National Nature Reserve and pond creation
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes funding has supported: tree planting, woodland management, orchard creation, hedge planting and laying, pond restoration and creation, chalk stream restoration, wetland creation, chalk grassland management and restoration and specialist species surveys

Challenges for future delivery

- Delivery of the CCNL Partnership Plan is largely reliant on maintenance of staffing and the securing of external revenue and capital to ensure delivery
- Delivery of the CCNL Nature Recovery Plan is largely reliant on securing external revenue and capital expenditure to enable impactful delivery
- Delivery could be impacted by a reduction and/or removal of environmental land management funding from central government. This includes funding for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and funding for facilitation of farmer clusters. There is also the challenge of competing land use, especially on agricultural land where economic viability is the primary consideration

4. Highlights and next steps

This first biodiversity report demonstrates how nature is already embedded across so many of our council functions, with approximately 28 teams or service areas reporting their policies, objectives and actions to conserve or enhance biodiversity.

Over the next five years we will build upon these existing successes and increase our efforts to deliver more nature recovery. This will be achieved by increasing collaborative working across the organisation, to avoid working in silo and identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits through joint projects and resource sharing, as well as expanding our partnership working with external partners and Dorset's communities through the implementation of the Dorset local nature recovery strategy.

We will also look to make our evaluation and monitoring more consistent across the organisation to be able to present a clearer picture of our successes and remaining areas of improvement. This will be done for the council, but in alignment with the monitoring framework we are developing according to national guidance for the county-wide monitoring of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

5. Appendices

Appendix A: Greenspace, protected sites and parks – further detail on impacts, evaluation and monitoring

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) condition assessment

- SSSIs at Avon Heath Country Park were last assessed by Natural England in 2017, the condition was ‘unfavourable recovering’ due to the number of mature trees on the heathland
 - Since then, countryside stewardship scheme funding has enabled removal of at least 90% of the trees, so it is now expected to be in favourable condition
 - It is estimated 80-90% of actions are on-track to restore the SSSI to favourable condition
- South Dorset Coast SSSI, of which Durlston Country Park is major part, was last assessed as in ‘favourable’ condition.
- The part of the Moors River System SSSI that runs through Moors Valley Country Park remains in unfavourable condition - no change
 - This is due to a number of factors outside the sites control, including:
 - Agricultural runoff
 - Pollution incidents in the Ebblake Stream
 - Surface runoff from Verwood Town approximately 1 mile upriver
 - Historical changes the water course
 - Invasive non-native species (mink)
 - Past and current management activities that Moors Valley Country Park team have been involved in to improve site condition, include:
 - Creating artificial riffles
 - Mink monitoring programme, working with local landowners
 - Water vole release programme
 - EA fish monitoring surveys, most recently 2024
 - Restoring old ponds and ditches along the watercourse for invertebrates & amphibians
 - Tree management along river banks to provide shade/rest areas

Engagement activities

- Engagement with visitors across Dorset Council’s 4 country parks can be defined in 3 ways:
 - Formal: national and/or official measure and accreditation; national curriculum (visiting school groups), further and higher education, Duke of Edinburgh, scouts etc
 - Informal: self-generated measure; participants engaging through events, trails, birthday parties, volunteers
 - Non-formal: Self-generated measure, short interactions with participant under 5 mins; exhibitions, roaming rangers and meet and greets
- Table 5 summarises environmental engagement across Dorset Council’s 4 country parks

	Volunteer hours	Formal interactions	Overall visitor interactions
Avon Heath Country Park (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	1020.4	8873	34,828
Durlston Country Park (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	18,531	1597	37,793
Moors Valley Country Park (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	1107.5	1545	56,332
Thorncombe Wood (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	4397	719	9754
(01.01.23 to 30.12.25)	8372	1812	18,440

Table 4 country park engagement figures

- At Avon Heath Country Park, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 included:
 - 1020.4hrs of volunteer time including scrub clearance, wildlife surveys and practical estates work
 - 8,873 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 34,828 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data
 - Linwood School (SEND School) attending for 1 hour a week for 6 week blocks, with between 3 and 5 students they have assisted with pine clearance.
 - Sheiling School (SEND School) have attended weekly with between 1 and 4 students, usually involving litter picking, sharpening pencils or moving logs for us for an hour once a week, as well as a larger group in March 2025 that undertook some planting
 - Duke of Edinburgh students and volunteers removing planters and willow from the site
 - Regular volunteers have assisted with many projects including clearing 1.25 hectares of an overgrown pond
- At Durlston Country Park, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 included:
 - 18,531 of volunteer time including land management, visitor service tasks and wildlife surveys. Volunteer time spent on specific activities includes:
 - 2,600 hours of wildlife surveys
 - 7800 hours of volunteer time maintaining the Favourable condition of the SSSI by undertaking practical habitat work (scrub cutting, moving, clearing), cattle management (moving cows around the site) and boundary management (dry-stone walling, fencing, hedgelaying)
 - 1,597 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 37,793 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data. These visitor interactions are comprised of:
 - 80 environmental based guided walks and events (80)
 - 1300 school children on paid sessions

- 1100 Volunteer Ranger engagements with public on patrols providing info about the site and the wildlife
- At Thorncombe Woods, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.01.23 to 30.12.25 included:
 - 8,372 hours of volunteer time including land management, wildlife surveys and practical estates work
 - 715 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 7,501 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data.
 - Volunteer contributions to wildlife surveys includes:
 - Bird surveys by 1 volunteer (monthly all year)
 - Bat surveys by 5 Dorset bat group volunteers (monthly March-November)
 - Dormice surveys by 3 Dorset Mammal Group volunteers (monthly March-November)
 - Moth surveys by 1 volunteer (monthly all year in 2024)
 - Moth surveys by work placement students (ad hoc in 2025)
 - Reptile surveys by work placements and apprentices (ad hoc)
 - Amphibian surveys by 4 volunteers (March to May)
- At Moors Valley Country park, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 included:
 - 1,107.5 hours of volunteer time including scrub clearance, wildlife surveys and practical estates work
 - 1,545 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 56,332 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data

Report compiled by the Natural Environment Team on behalf of teams and services at Dorset Council. Report authors: Nikki Taylor, Amy Smith, Josh Morris & Bridget Betts - 15/01/2026