

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

24 September 2026

Climate and Nature Progress Report – Spring Summer 2026 – Key Lines of Enquiry

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader, Climate, Performance, Communications and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): County Wide

Senior Leadership Team:

S Ford - Assistant Chief Executive

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Dorset Council remains committed to delivering its ambition for a climate-friendly, nature-positive and resilient Dorset. The need for action continues to grow as Dorset experiences the impacts of climate change, including more frequent extreme weather, flooding and coastal change, alongside continued pressures on biodiversity and the natural environment. Through its Climate and Nature Programme, the council is progressing action to reduce emissions, recover nature and strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- 1.2 This report replaces the Spring/Summer 2026 Climate and Nature Progress Report. Rather than providing a comprehensive update on all climate and nature activity, it responds to a series of key lines of enquiry requested by Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Responses have been grouped

into five themes: strategic approach, climate resilience, projects and programmes, communications and engagement, and funding. Detailed responses and supporting evidence are provided within the accompanying appendix.

- 1.3 The report highlights continued progress across a broad programme of activity, including carbon reduction, renewable energy generation, sustainable transport, flood and coastal resilience, and community engagement. Particular emphasis is placed on the council's strategic approach to adaptation and resilience, including development of a Dorset-wide Climate Adaptation Strategy and associated climate risk assessment frameworks.
- 1.4 The report also highlights the importance of nature recovery as a key component of Dorset's response to the climate and ecological emergencies. The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides the county's long-term framework for restoring habitats, supporting species recovery and delivering wider benefits for climate resilience, water management, carbon sequestration and community wellbeing.
- 1.5 It also notes the importance of the council's strategic leadership role and that delivery continues to depend on effective partnership working, external funding and coordinated action across organisations, landowners, communities and businesses. While positive progress is being made, sustained effort and investment will be required to deliver the council's long-term ambitions.
- 1.6 A fuller quantitative assessment of programme performance, project delivery and progress against climate and nature indicators will be presented through the next Climate and Nature Progress Report scheduled for December 2026.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. To review progress made in delivering the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy during 2025/26.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1. In line with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on 12 May 2021 that the Committee would provide oversight against progress and delivery of the strategy and action plan via six monthly progress reports. The Committee's views will be used to inform the shape of the next phase of the delivery programme.

4. The report

4.1. The appendix to this report provides detailed responses to the key lines of enquiry raised by the Committee. To aid navigation, the responses have been grouped into five themes: Strategic Approach, Climate Resilience, Projects and Programmes, Communications and Engagement, and Funding. A high-level summary of each theme is provided below, with the appendix containing the supporting evidence, data and detailed narrative.

4.2. Strategic approach

4.2.1. Dorset Council's climate and nature work is organised around three interconnected priorities: climate change mitigation, nature recovery, and climate adaptation and resilience. The council's approach recognises that these challenges are closely linked and require coordinated action across council services, partners, communities and businesses. The council continues to provide strategic leadership through the development of policies, plans and partnership frameworks that support a climate-resilient and nature-rich Dorset.

4.2.2. Progress is being supported through key strategic initiatives including the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), development of a Dorset-wide Climate Adaptation Strategy, and the emerging Local Plan. Together these frameworks are intended to provide the long-term direction, governance and monitoring arrangements needed to support delivery of the council's climate and nature ambitions.

4.3. Climate resilience

4.3.1. Climate adaptation and resilience are becoming an increasingly important part of the council's climate and nature programme. Work is underway with BCP Council and a range of partners to develop a Dorset-wide Climate Adaptation Strategy, creating a shared understanding of climate risks and helping to coordinate action across the county. This work is informed by national climate projections, local evidence and lessons learned from recent flooding and severe weather events, as well as the deliberations of the Dorset Citizens' Climate Panel.

4.3.2. Alongside strategic planning, climate resilience is being embedded within operational decision making through risk assessment, emergency planning, flood management, nature recovery activity and infrastructure investment. The council is working to ensure that services, communities and assets are better prepared for the increasing impacts of climate change, including flooding, coastal erosion, extreme heat and water resource pressures.

4.4. Projects and programmes

- 4.4.1. Delivery of climate and nature objectives is supported through a broad portfolio of projects and programmes spanning energy, transport, flood resilience, waste infrastructure, nature recovery and sustainable transport. These investments are helping to reduce operational carbon emissions, strengthen resilience and support biodiversity, while also delivering wider economic and community benefits.
- 4.4.2. Major initiatives include building decarbonisation, renewable energy generation, highway and transport improvements, flood resilience schemes, waste infrastructure upgrades and strategic nature recovery projects delivered through council services and partnerships.
- 4.5. Communications and engagement
 - 4.5.1. Effective communication and engagement are essential to achieving Dorset's climate and nature ambitions. The council continues to use a range of communication channels, behaviour change campaigns and community engagement approaches to increase awareness, encourage participation and support residents and businesses to act.
 - 4.5.2. Recent campaigns and programmes demonstrate strong levels of public engagement and participation, including support for home energy improvements, nature recovery initiatives and climate adaptation activities. The council also works extensively through partnerships and community networks to ensure messages reach a broad range of audiences and provide opportunities for residents to help shape local priorities.
- 4.6. Funding
 - 4.6.1. Investment in climate and nature activity is drawn from a combination of council funding, external grant programmes and partnership contributions. The council continues to prioritise projects that can demonstrate clear environmental outcomes, strategic alignment and value for money, while maximising opportunities to secure external investment.
 - 4.6.2. Since the declaration of the climate and nature emergencies, climate and nature programmes have attracted significant external funding, enabling delivery at a scale that would not otherwise have been possible. Looking ahead, further investment will be required to continue progress towards the council's carbon reduction, climate resilience and nature recovery objectives, with a range of future funding opportunities currently being explored.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1. Not applicable

6. Legal considerations

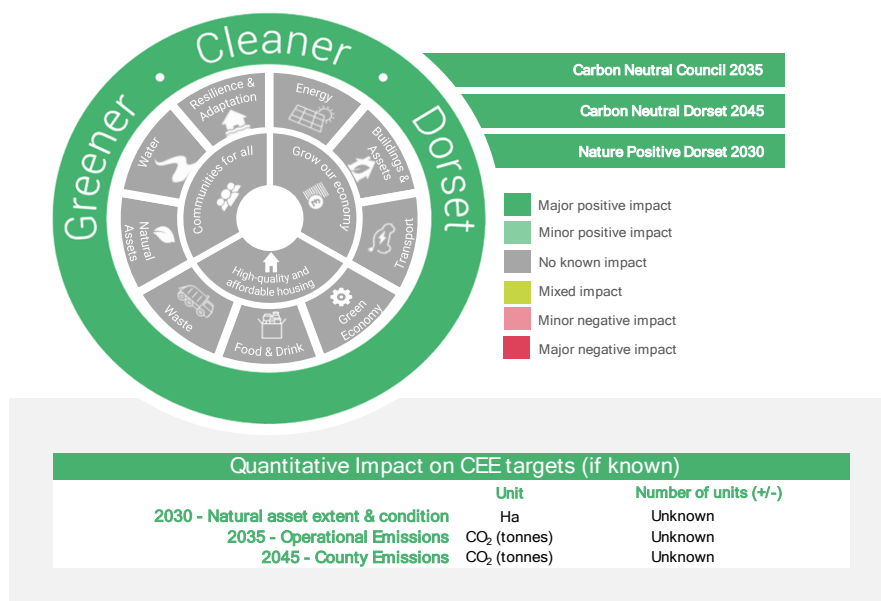
6.1. Not applicable

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. This report itself has no direct financial implications. It provides an overview of climate and nature activity and responds to the key lines of enquiry requested by Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Further information on funding, investment and future requirements is provided within the accompanying appendix.
- 7.2. Delivery of Dorset Council's Climate and Nature Programme is supported through a combination of council investment, external grant funding and partnership contributions. Since the declaration of the climate and nature emergencies, climate and nature programmes have attracted approximately £93 million of investment, around 85% of which has been secured from external sources. This has enabled the council to deliver a wide range of programmes supporting carbon reduction, nature recovery and climate resilience.
- 7.3. Dorset Council has allocated £16.025m capital funding to support delivery of its operational carbon reduction programme and associated climate objectives. Investment to date has contributed to reduced energy consumption, lower operational emissions, renewable energy generation and reduced exposure to rising energy costs. Further investment will be required to maintain progress towards the council's climate, nature recovery and resilience ambitions, and the report highlights the identified need for an additional £18.975m in the medium term and the ongoing work to explore opportunities to secure additional external funding.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1. This report has no direct implications. It provides an overview of activity being undertaken to deliver the council's climate and nature ambitions through emissions reduction, nature recovery and climate resilience initiatives, which will in turn aim for positive impacts across all areas.



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1. This report has no direct health or wellbeing implications. The delivery of climate and nature programmes will, however, provide wider benefits through improved public health, healthier environments, increased access to nature and greater resilience to climate-related impacts.

10. Other implications

- 10.1. There are no other specific implications contained in this report. As previously noted, the strategy and action plan itself has wide ranging implications, opportunities, and benefits for the way the council delivers services and works with others across the county.

10.2. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

- 10.4. The publication of this report helps fulfil the council's commitment to provide regular public reporting on progress against its climate and nature ambitions. Failure to provide transparent and regular updates could result in reputational risk to the council, given the significant public and member interest in this area.
- 10.5. Climate change and ecological decline present significant long-term risks to Dorset Council, local communities, infrastructure, the natural environment and

service delivery. Failure to make sufficient progress in reducing emissions, supporting nature recovery and improving climate resilience is likely to increase future environmental, financial and operational risks.

11. Equalities

- 11.1. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report. However, climate change can disproportionately affect vulnerable communities and individuals. The Climate and Nature Programme aims to help reduce these impacts through measures that support climate resilience, healthier environments and sustainable outcomes for Dorset residents.

12. Appendices

- 12.1. Climate & Nature: Update and Key Lines of Enquiry - September 2026

13. Background papers

- 13.1. [Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh - Dorset Council](#)
- 13.2. [Council Plan Annual Performance Reports - Dorset Council](#)

14. Report sign-off

- 14.1. This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s).