

# **Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd**

## **4 November 2026**

### **Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Managing Director Update**

#### **For Review and Consultation**

Report Author: Kevin Forshaw  
Title: Dorset Innovation Park Managing Director

**Report Status:** Part Exempt / Appendix One Para 3

#### **Brief Summary:**

This report provides an update on the current situation at the Dorset Innovation Park Ltd (“the Company”) and an update from the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2026 report provided to the Shareholder Committee.

#### **1. Report**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the work to date by the Company to establish both itself as an operational entity and on delivering the ambitions of the Shareholder for the Dorset Innovation Park (DIP). It also provides an update on key deliverables cited in the company Business Plan presented and approved at the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026 Shareholder Committee.
- 1.2 **Transfer to the Company of Dorset Innovation Park Asset Management** – The Company took over DIP asset management on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2026. All tenants have now been informed and new contacts for operational leads circulated. Since June an extensive programme to tidy up lease terms in place on the Park, and also to recover bad debts has been underway. This has placed a significant burden on the Company Property and Asset Manager, and also the Council Legal Team, but getting all of this sorted will provide a firm foundation for growth from 2027 onwards.

- 1.3 **DIP Improvements** – A Project Management firm has now been appointed to drive key improvement works as outlined in the Business Plan. These include: updating the proposed design, selection and then construction of the replacement gatehouse and demolition of redundant brick switching house. This process was completed with full compliance of the PPR based upon location, value for money and suitability to drive the works specified.
- 1.4 **Major Development Projects** – at a high-level, the prospects for the Park are now looking very encouraging. A pre-application for planning permission has been submitted for one major development, and Heads of Terms have been agreed for another. We are also working through plans for an Advanced Skills and Research Centre (see 1.5), and interest in a further plot is currently being explored with more enquiries for other areas now having been received.
- 1.5 **Further and Higher Education engagements** – Yeovil College have committed £2.6m to a new campus at the Park and we are currently exploring how Dorset Council can match this with a further £2m to urgently create the future skilled workforce for Defence Sector expansion in the County. Conversations also continue with Bournemouth University and Glasgow Universities to see how they can also engage with this. It is likely that this wider development will also include Maker Space that will benefit from Rapid Prototyping equipment and conversations continue with the MoD to try to prevent duplication with any equipment they will purchase. Engagement in the Plymouth led LIPF fund would also provide grant funding for this.

Heads of Terms have now also been supplied to Bournemouth University's for the Security Operations Centre of the Future (SOCOF) development in BattleLab this being funded out of the £2.3m funding secured from an Office for Students Grant.

- 1.6 **Local Innovation Partnerships Fund** – The council's Economic Development team and the Company are continuing to work jointly to shape Dorset engagement in the Plymouth City led Local Innovation Partnerships Fund application. The Dorset Offer and Ask was submitted to Plymouth focussed on a £1.7m capital request for a Multi-Domain Autonomy Command and Control Centre that also incorporates a flight corridor from the Park to Portland and hopeful 'Maker Space'. We are now awaiting the formal application form for this to be released before bringing all delivery partners together to work through precise system

specification, cost and matching funds available. The project will also provide funding for R&D and testing and evaluation and hopefully a new post to be based at DIP from February 2027.

**1.7 Defence Strategic Investment Plan, Second Round Table 21<sup>st</sup> October**

The draft wording for the Dorset Defence prospectus, the LIPF response and also plans for the Advanced Skills and Research Centre were discussed at a second roundtable of key Defence companies on the 21<sup>st</sup> October which engaged around 25 attendees. The intention now is to finalise the words with images and to get the prospectus printed by the end of this year. This flagging the very significant contribution that Dorset companies are making to UK Defence and Security and also key asks for support from Westminster, noting that Lloyd Hatton MP has been discussing the need for the Advanced Skills Centre on the Park in the House of Commons.

**1.8 Regional Testing and Evaluation Capability** – A booking system has now been developed for use for all drone flying demonstrations on the Park. This included an assessment of the Risk Assessment and Methodology submitted for each intended booking. Work also continues on the drone corridor to Portland via Lulworth, and we are planning to increase awareness of the depth and breadth of the Dorset multi-domain autonomous test capability via revision to the website and in a section of the new Dorset Defence Prospectus.

Note also that the LIPF project is intending to form challenge cohorts, with companies enrolled onto these being funded for R&D and T&E.

**1.9 BattleLab developments** – ShoreLine Services continue to occupy an area on the first floor of BattleLab, but all plans for the Company to further sub-divide other areas of the building to accommodate additional companies are now on hold (see Exempt business).

**1.10 Facilities Management** – closer working with the current Facilities Management agent (CBRE) continues with additional efficiencies indicated in Exempt Business. The FM Contract will also now be market tested in 2027.

**1.11 Outstanding Lease Events and Aged Debt** – The Company has been working closely with the council's legal team to review a list of tenants on DIP who are not paying rent or service charge because of their lease terms have expired. Similar tidying up has also been initiated for aged debt and further information is also contained in Exempt Business.

- 1.12 **Company Compliance and Operation** – A separate report has been produced on company Governance.
- 1.13 **Recruitment Updates** – The company has temporarily engaged a Senior Finance person who is working part-time to work through the detail of financial forecasting with CBRE and also Council Accountancy leads to determine a very accurate financial position for the Park that will also allow us to forecast out the impact from development projects now taking place.

This role will establish a robust set of financial reporting processes that can be used to report into the Shareholders and Company Board, and will work with appointed accountants - Albert Goodman - to ensure accurate presentation of company accounts in line with the operating and funding model envisaged.

We have also appointed a Bournemouth University Masters Student parttime to assist with the development and implementation of a communications strategy for the Park.

- 1.14 **Transition Meetings** - The series of transition meetings between the council and the Company have now concluded, but we are revisiting a number of specific issues to work through the most time-efficient and commercially responsive way for the company to progress various matters, while ensuring compliance with PPR and other regulation for the Council. These specifically seeing to optimise processes relating to Capital Improvements and Major Development Projects, with a need to refocus on how wider development on the Park can be financed going forward (more detail in Finance Paper in Exempt Business).
- 1.15 **Wider Dorset Innovation Park Promotion** – The Innovation Park has been included in an article being prepared for Dorset Life, and Dorset Echo are now also seeking to produce a separate article on developments.

DIP had a stand at the Alan Turing Technology Festival in Sherborne on the 16<sup>th</sup> October with exhibits kindly loaned by Latent Drive and Vaspba. The event also included stands from our partners Yeovil College, Bournemouth University and Dorset Council UK, and other organisations including BAE Systems, Thales, Leonardo, University of Bath and the Bletchley Park Trust.

I am chairing a Panel on Defence Investment representing DIP at the South Coast CPS Conference in Southampton on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, and

am also on a Mission Critical Panel on the 18<sup>th</sup> November at Venture Fest South at the Utilita Bowl, Southampton.

- 1.15 **University of Connecticut Visit on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> November** – previous contact made with University of Connecticut has led to a meeting being convened in BattleLab that will engage Plymouth, Bath, Exeter, Southampton and Portsmouth Universities along with representatives from key Dorset and wider South West Defence Companies and the Society of Maritime Industries.

## 2. **Alternative Options Considered**

- 2.1 Not applicable

## 3. **Legal Implications**

- 3.1 No decisions are requested from this report and it is provided to note, consequently there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

## 4. **Implications**

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

## 5. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

## 6. **Well-Being and Health Implications**

- 6.1 N/A

## 7. **Other Implications**

- 7.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

## 8. **Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 There are no specific risk implications arising from this report.

## 9. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 9.1 No decisions are requested from this report. As such, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

N/A

**10. Background Papers**

N/A

**11. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Reserved Matters (Exempt document – Paragraph 3)