



Dorset AONB Partnership
Hosted by Dorset Council
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Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 10.00am, Thurs 19th Nov 2020, by Zoom

The meeting will start at 10.00 am sharp; the Zoom meeting room open from 0945. If you are unable to attend it would be helpful if you could send a briefed representative or an update. Please send apologies to Kate Townsend on kate.townsend@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

AGENDA

Welcome, introductions and apologies

- 1. Election of chair**
- 2. Dorset Race Equalities Council – role**
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**
- 4. National Grid’s Visual Impact Provision (Dorset undergrounding project) (external speaker presentation)**
- 5. Spring/summer 2020: pandemic visitors, the experience from Lulworth (external speaker presentation)**
- 6. Delivering the AONB Management Plan (information)**
- 7. Dorset AONB 2020-2021 Budget Outline (decision)**
- 8. 90-second Partner updates**
- 9. Any other business**

Dates of next meetings

	Spring	Winter
AONB Steering Group	27 th April 2021	19 th October 2021
AONB Partnership Board	20 th May 2021	25 th November 2021

Anyone wishing to bring an item forward for discussion should contact Tom Munro or the Chairman. Proposals are discussed by the Steering Group which recommends the agenda to the chair for their decision.

ITEM 1: ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

ITEM FOR	Decision	REPORT BY	AONB Team
SUMMARY	Voting members of the AONB Board must select a new chairman		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	None		
RECOMMENDATION	The AONB Board proposes the new chairman based on votes cast in advance of the board meeting		

- 1.1. Jim White is standing down as chairman of the AONB Partnership Board.
- 1.2. **Voting representatives are asked to state their preference for the new chairman from a choice of two candidates in advance of the meeting by email to Tom Munro (tom.munro@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk), preferably by Tuesday 17th November.** This is to facilitate voting and recording in case technological difficulties prevent full participation in the online meeting.
- 1.3. Two candidates have shown an interest in becoming chair of the AONB Partnership Board: Dr Phil Sterling and Robert Lasseter. A short biography for each is appended to this paper.
- 1.4. There is one vote per listed representative. Voting representatives are:

Organisation	Representative
Council for the Protection of Rural England	Dr Guy Dickinson
Country Land and Business Association	Commander Rupert Best DL
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	ClIr Peter Bowyer ClIr Mike Jones ClIr Janet Page
Dorset Council	ClIr Ray Bryan ClIr Jane Somper ClIr Roland Tarr
Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership	Luke Rake
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Jim White MBE
Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society	Jeremy Pope OBE DL
Environment Agency	Keith Calder
Forestry Commission	Chris Gibbard
Historic England	Ross Simmonds

Jeremy Pope (DNHAS) – update for Dorset County Museum: works have continued through lockdown with some disruption caused by CV19 – notably socially distancing onsite and a shortage of plaster and Perspex (latter being prioritised towards safe working screens in retail across the country). Completion expected in the autumn; discussion ongoing about when and how to reopen. The heritage and attractions sector as a whole is suffering from the cut-off of visitor income.

Luke Rake (Dorset LEP) – the LEP has confirmed a successful tender for the Dorset Investment Prospectus, following on from the Local Industrial Strategy. The latter is still with government and has an unknown publication or confirmation date at this time. The contract for drawing up the prospectus has been awarded to Sandra Rothwell who is well known to members of the LNP and thus some around this group. The LEP will ensure the LNP is consulted in due course (probably August/September) in the first instance and this will allow the AONB to thus be involved. The LEP Rural Enterprise Group has not met for some time due to the pandemic and delays in the LIS. A meeting is tentatively planned for early July to draw together some learning from the pandemic and the effects on rural areas both during and coming out of lockdown – TM should attend, there will undoubtedly be some discussion about pressure on outdoor spaces that we have already seen, and may become more normal...this also provides an opportunity perhaps. KMC continues to remain largely closed but is starting to re-open to ensure training for statutory ‘tickets’ can be completed to support the conservation and land management sector. A new faculty for heritage and tourism land management is being planned for marketing implementation from September 2020, with first students (sixth form age) from September 2021. The AONB support with this would be welcomed.

3. Succession of chairman

Process approved unanimously (quorate).

4. Delivering the AONB Management Plan

Team delivery described in the papers. Additionally, video presentations were shared about

- Stepping into Nature <https://youtu.be/7ewp71ZtseU>
- The River Asker pilot project <https://youtu.be/3w7KaAAskp0>
- West Bay visitor welcome and orientation <https://youtu.be/bYDhrz4bGpg>
- Fossil Forest access <https://youtu.be/zM2C1CEqxlo>

Comments:

JP: As it is likely to be the largest housing site permitted in any AONB, ever, is there anything more this Partnership can do to resist the permission for 700+ houses at Vearse Farm, Bridport?

I feel that it will be a sad indictment of what the AONB stands for if this project proceeds in its existing form. How can the Council countenance approving the construction of 760 house, which would be by far the largest development in any AONB, quite apart from the damage it would do to a small market town like Bridport. In sharp contrast to the successful appeal mounted by the CPRE Kent in 2016 against the proposed Farthingale site adjacent to Dover the Judge threw out the application by Advearse and others for judicial review of the planning permission, notwithstanding the fact that he was highly critical of the planning officer's report to the Planning Committee when it was considering the planning application. Perhaps what was even more surprising was that the Committee decided to delegate the authority to Council's Head of Planning to grant the permission.

The Kent case related to proposals to build 521 houses and other buildings including a 90 apartment retirement village. In his judgement Lord Justice Laws made several telling comments. First quoting a remark made by the judge in the lower court:

'It is said, and I believe to be uncontentious, that the scale of the proposed development is unprecedented in an AONB'

And then:

'There is first, the pressing nature of the policy expressed in NPPF paragraphs 115 and 116 - 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty...' A planning authority which is going to authorise a development which will inflict substantial harm on an AONB must surely give substantial reasons for doing so'

The Vearse Farm Project is not only substantially larger than the Farthingale case, but seemingly the decision was waved through on a delegated basis and I am not aware in any 'substantial reasons' were advanced to justify the damage it would undoubtedly inflict on the AONB. So in all the circumstances .I feel that this is something which needs to be debated (and I hope challenged) within the partnership as, with respect, the project is totally at odds with what the AONB stands for and we need to say as much to the Council in relation to the Local Plan.

JWr: It would be nice to think that the Dorset Downs & Vales conservation group could help to contribute to implementation of the DEFRA expectations of an AONB unit. This might also help the group to develop its thinking on its focus and purpose.

Also would be very interested to know NAAONB's views on a new National Landscape Service.

[TM response: DD&VCG does contribute! It isn't shown in that matrix as it hasn't been considered a 'project' for accounting and reporting purposes.

NAAONB made a joint response to government on NLS with NE & National Parks England in April '20, reinforced by a letter to the Secretary of State. This can be made available on request]

JS: Point 5. Farming can contribute to assist in prevention or lessening, in some instances of flooding by adopting particular practices on land, ie. ploughing differently to create run-offs

4.3C delighted to see that in some villages in Beacon Ward that someone has taken it upon themselves to remove, fix and re-instate broken fingerposts (they remain anonymous)

4.6c. I will be interested to see the draft plan when available. What areas in Dorset are taking part?

4.7 I have been very impressed with the huge efforts that Df&D have put in to providing support to its members and the wider Dorset food community in the most challenging of times for many, particularly those who rely so much on the large events that generate significant income.

[TM response: 1. Different cultivation techniques are certainly part of the toolbox available to reduce flood risk and soil loss. 2. We also celebrate their achievements – will try to list all communities who've contributed effort and finances. 3 Update in these papers – farmer clusters in the Isle of Purbeck, Marshwood Vale/Brit Valley and Frome/Hooke]

RESOLUTION: The Board approved and noted the progress made on delivering the Management Plan 2014-2019.

5. 2019-2020 Annual Finance Report

- k. Significant loss of income to DF&D CIC through inability to trade and a 3-month membership fee freeze.

6.2. **Action area reporting**

The table on the following page shows Defra's expectations of an AONB staff unit and the report headings under which those functions are reported.

6.3. **AONB team**

- a. Landscape Planning Officer: in August, Sarah Barber returned to her substantive post with Dorset Council after 10 months secondment with the team. Richard Brown has returned to the post, currently on slightly reduced hours.
- b. Wild Purbeck Project Coordinator: in September, Caroline Kelly joined the team to take on this role. Previously working on the Dorset heaths through the Back from the Brink programme, Caroline has been a member of the Wild Purbeck Partnership and is a highly experienced ecologist. The post is 0.6FTE, with 0.1FTE dedicated to the Silverlake Conservation and Community Fund.

CORE WORK

6.4. **Providing landscape-related planning advice via the Planning Protocol**

- a. 67 planning cases reviewed over Q1 & 2
- b. A response has been submitted concerning the proposed Power Plant at Portland. Concerns were expressed regarding the impact of visible emissions and it has been requested that these be better represented and assessed before the application is determined.
- c. A response to the proposed extension of Swanworth quarry has been submitted. The AONB has objected to the proposal on the grounds that the effects of the proposal will be significant in comparison with the existing requirement to restore the quarry. The Council will be undertaking a major development test when determining the application.
- d. The AONB Team continue to be engaged in discussion regarding proposals at Knoll House Hotel (Studland), where objections to the scale and design of a proposed report have been submitted. The Council will be undertaking a major development test when determining the application.
- e. Discussions concerning the process by which consultations on planning applications are issued and allocated to various staff with landscape and conservation expertise are ongoing. An internal review is being progressed and it is expected that this may recommend changes to the processes currently in place. If necessary, a follow-on review of the AONB's Planning Protocol will be undertaken.

		CORE WORK	Wild Purbeck	Community Woodlands	DF&D	Fingerposts	Stepping into Nature	LEI Marshwood Vale	LEI SDR	JC Visitor Management	Rivers	Heritage Tourism (INTERREG)	LPS Development	Low Carbon Binomass	H&W (Winchester Uni Collab)	Fisheries Feasibility
Defra's core functions of an AONB staff unit																
a	Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRoW Act AONB Management Plan															
b	Promoting the AONB vision and management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside															
c	Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan															
d	Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service/attain the highest possible standards in countryside mgt															
e	Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets															
f	Monitoring AONB landscape condition															
g	Accessing resources for management activities															
h	Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally															
i	Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level															
j	Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB															
k	Providing landscape related planning advice															
NAAONB's Strategic Objectives (Strategic Plan 2016-2020)																
1	Support policies for conserving and enhancing natural beauty															
2	Develop an understanding of AONBs and the issues they face															
3	Improve the way in which AONB partnerships and the NAAONB work together															
4	Secure and manage resources															
Dorset AONB Management Plan (2019-2024) Objectives																
A1	Management of land and sea conserves & enhances natural heritage, natural assets, ecosystem flows and the services they provide															
A2	Management of land and sea conserves & enhances the historic environment															
A3	Management of land and sea supports natural processes and allows evolution with environmental change															
A4	Skills for sustainable land management and the green economy are fostered															
A5	Markets for sustainably produced goods are promoted and supported															
B1	Opportunities to experience and access the landscape for health & wellbeing benefits are plentiful]															
B2	High quality sustainable tourism and access is widely available															
B3	There is wide awareness and understanding of the Dorset AONB landscape, its special qualities and management															
B4	Local people are actively engaged in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB, its special qualities, natural processes and ecosystem benefits															
C1	The AONB and its setting is conserved and enhanced by good planning and development															
C2	Landscape assessment & monitoring is effective and supports good decision-making															
C3	Necessary development is supported															
C4	Development which has negative effects on the natural beauty of the AONB, its special qualities, ecosystem flows and natural processes is avoided															
D1	Local people are engaged in key decisions relating to their local environments in the AONB															
D2	Decision-making is supported by the best available information, understanding, good practice, tools and organisations															
D3	Monitoring informs and enables adaptation to achieve best outcomes															
D4	Collaborative working is developed through partnerships															
25 YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN GOALS																
1	Clean air															
2	Clean and plentiful water															
3	Thriving plants and wildlife															
4	A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought															
5	Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently															
6	Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment															
7	Mitigating and adapting to climate change															
8	Minimising waste															
9	Managing exposure to chemicals															
10	Enhancing biosecurity															

6.5. **Accessing resources / project development**

- a. The AONB Team has steering input to the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership via its Rural Enterprise Group and Dorset Destination Management Organisation to influence provision of funds to support conserving and enhancing the AONB
- b. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative: a third bid was ready for submission in January 2020, but the assessment panel was delayed: final submission was made in October 2020. This follows the format of previous applications, gathering a portfolio of landscape interventions across several holdings in the eligible area, around the maximum grant value of £200,000. Interventions include stone walling, tree planting, hedging, sward enhancement and wildflower work, scrub management, etc.
- c. A proposal to FESTIVAL UK 2022 was developed with NAAONB (Sue Dampney & Tom Munro contributed) bringing together diverse artists and scientists including Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, Arts University Bournemouth, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Activate Performing Arts and Maxwell Ayamba among others. Unfortunately this wasn't awarded development funding, but has created contacts and partnerships for future work.
- d. Green Recovery Challenge Fund: a £40M fund was brought forward from the Nature for Climate and Nature Recovery Funds to help retain and secure jobs in the environmental charities worst hit by Covid-19 and deliver on the headline outcomes of the origin funds. Bidding window was very short; projects must complete by March 2022. This fund was hugely oversubscribed; efforts are under way nationally to secure greater and more secure funding for nature as part of a Green Recovery. Decisions are expected by early December.
 - Purbeck Heaths Large Grazing Unit: a bid for £540k for a project value of £880k was led by Tom Munro on behalf of the RSPB & National Trust, for 7 highway cattle grids and around 14km perimeter fencing securing over 1300ha lowland heath for grazing by cattle, pigs and ponies. Alongside this capital work there is a proposed engagement programme and series of visitor management interventions.
 - NAAONB Nature Recovery Programme: an EOI for around £4,000,000 was submitted to resource a Nature Recovery Officer in each AONB with a modest delivery fund. Tom Munro was part of a 4-officer team pulling this together on behalf of England's AONBs. This was not invited through to full application.
 - Greening West Dorset's Hills & Vales: Ian Rees submitted a bid for £214,000 for a portfolio of landscape enhancements, scaling up existing delivery through partner organisations engaged in Dorset Rivers and Landscape Enhancement initiatives. Proposed outputs include 9 ponds, 250m river restoration, 6ha lowland meadow restoration, 36 traditional orchard trees, 1.7km new hedgerows, 24 new hedgerow oaks, 100m laid hedge, riverside Himalayan balsam clearance and 8km headwater tributaries better managed to slow the flow of water. It also included enhanced visitor infrastructure at Kingcombe Meadows (DWT) and community litter projects (Litter Free Dorset)
- e. Funding bids are being compiled for Dorset Food & Drink – see 6.13 for details.

6.6. **National Association for AONBs / Protected Landscapes** collaboration

- a. The NAAONB is working on a range of actions to develop practical actions in response to the Glover Review. It has also been engaged in providing advice to government on various of the report's recommendations.
- b. AONB Manager Tom Munro is engaged in a small national steering group for the Colchester Declaration. The steering group has delivered the following workshops as training for national staff
 - A nature recovery planning
 - A species recovery
 - An equality, diversity and inclusion

- c. AONB Culture, Community & Learning Officer Sue Dampney continues to support the NAAONB, helping to coordinate communications across the network during the Covid-19 pandemic, including branding for the national Landscapes for Life Week celebration in September.
- d. Arts in the Landscape - Connecting People to Nature: Sue Dampney also helps steer this Arts Council England funded project, led by NAAONB. The Strategy has now been agreed and will shape action and direction for Steering Group over the coming years. Arts Council England have been consulted on the Strategy and we hope may be interested in supporting some elements of implementation. The Steering Group has also put together an ambitious application to Festival UK* 2022 to develop a concept of a 'large scale public engagement showcasing creativity and innovation' focussed on connecting people to nature. The application was led by the NAAONB and the Team which draws from the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) sectors including poet laureate Simon Armitage journalist Maxwell Ayamba and Young Vic Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah.
- e. The Glover Report makes the recommendation to rename AONBs to 'National Landscapes'. This has been discussed within the AONB family and Cotswold AONB renamed to Cotswold National Landscape in September. As part of the national internal discussion on renaming, we have joined a working group to gather better intelligence about our audience – current and missing – and the values that should underpin our communication work in the future.
- f. Tom Munro continues to convene and chair the South West National Landscapes Forum with an online meeting in July and another scheduled for December

6.7. **Promotion of the AONB:** outreach

- a. A significant programme of engagement activity has been given support by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Dorset AONB. Since the last Partnership Board meeting there has been much 'behind the scenes' work on several projects which have been postponed and will now be adapted due to coronavirus:
 - Talking Tent: The Tent has been partly furnished (with social distancing in mind) in the hope that storyteller Martin Maudsley and poet Sarah Acton will run the Tent in Summer 2021. Ideas for a virtual Tent have been gathered and will be developed in Spring 2021 if need be.
 - Council of All Beings, a project exploring and celebrating the AONBs diverse wildlife is aimed at primary schools is being adapted so that it can be enacted in a Covid-safe manner in Summer Term 2021.
 - Landscapes for Life Photo Competition exhibition of 60 of the winning images was hosted by Durlston Country Park in August, initially for a two-week run which was extended to 10 weeks! Although no preview event was possible, we received very good feedback. The exhibition is booked for Dorset County Hospital in Spring 2021, though plans may be Covid disrupted. The top 13 images also appear in Dorset Magazine's 2021 Calendar and a contribution from sales will be made to the AONB. The Youth Category of the Competition was extended to 1st November and we look forward to judging that with Helen Stiles (Dorset Magazine) and Matt Pinner (photographer) later in November.

6.8. **Promotion of the AONB:** Print, website & social media

- a. Landscapes for Life Week in September adopted different themes for each day so we could showcase what's special about our nationally important landscapes. Although missing our face-to-face events, we got a good level of interest from online.
- b. Dorset Magazine continues to support our 60th anniversary with a monthly page article and features and would like to continue regular contributions thereafter.
- c. Regular newsletters continue to be circulated to c18,000 members of the public and local organisations, with news of events, training, activities and project updates. This mailing list is developed through sign ups at public events and through AONB Team contacts.

- d. Work is still underway to update our popular '40 Days Out in the Dorset AONB' booklet, which will include 60 places and activities which highlight the 4 special qualities of the AONB designation and promote sustainable visits. We have invested time in getting all the sites on our website.
- e. Social media following
 - 8,999 Twitter followers @DorsetAONB; 1,534 followers on <https://www.facebook.com/Dorset-Area-of-Outstanding-Natural-Beauty-AONB-449270285224339/>
 - 21,667 Twitter followers @DorsetFoodDrink; 5,761 followers on <https://www.facebook.com/dorsetfoodanddrink/>
 - 779 Twitter followers @StepIn2Nature; 1,692 followers on <https://www.facebook.com/stepin2nature/>

PROJECTS: THOSE RELATED TO MANAGMENT PLAN CHAPTER "THE WORKING LANDSCAPE"

6.9. [Reconnecting the Ridgeway Landscape Enhancement Initiative](#)

Background: a 3-year National Grid funded project at just under £200,000, running to December 2021. Conservation activity is being delivered across the South Dorset Ridgeway area in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West and farmers and land managers on 11 sites (originally 12: one site has dropped out and plans put in place to replace output on an existing site).

- a. Work is underway on 8 sites, completed on 1, with work in planning for the remaining 2.
- b. The following outputs have been achieved to date:
 - 1,100m of hedgerow laid
 - 875m new hedgerow planted
 - 1,680m fencing installed
 - 6 standard hedgerow trees planted and protected by post & wire guards
 - 2.2ha chalk downland managed for scrub
 - 65m dry stone wall restored
- c. Some of this work has been undertaken by local contractors, and some by volunteers who have generated match funding valued at £18,000, with landowners and partner organisations contributing £9,500 in kind.
- d. Volunteer delivery resumed briefly and in a limited way in September/October but is on hold again following the reimposition of Covid-19 restrictions. We are in touch with National Grid who are reviewing delivery across all LEIs.

6.10. [Magical Marshwood: Landscape Enhancement Initiative](#)

Background: A three-year funded project by the National Grid at just under £200,000, running to Spring 2021. Conservation activity is being delivered in the Marshwood Vale in partnership with the Dorset Wildlife Trust and National Trust along with 24 farmers and land managers.

- a. To date, the project has:
 - Restored 4.5 hectares of lowland meadow by ploughing out existing poor-quality grass and drilling it with locally sourced wild-flower meadow seeds from another LEI site.
 - 1,855 metres of hedge laying have been completed, predominantly by hand with volunteers but 445 metres have been undertaken mechanically; trialling a cost-effective way of delivery.
 - 87 hedgerow trees have been planted, again, mostly with the help of volunteers. Monitoring to ensure establishment has taken place.

- 24 Orchard trees have been planted with others grafted on to suitable root stock ready for planting this winter
 - 7 ponds have been restored
 - 5.2 hectares of scrub has been cleared with a further two hectares underway.
 - One river restoration project is complete with a further one underway.
 - Had a presence at one event: the well-established Melplash Show, after being asked by one of the landowners to attend.
 - We have commenced on the wild daffodil nursery, with successful multi-year growth. Maintenance is ongoing and we are planning the next steps to ensure the facility can continue once funding has come to the end.
 - Dorset Environmental Records Centre are updating the monitoring report.
 - 44 volunteer sessions with 629 attending totalling 3,205 hours.
- b. Covid restrictions have had limited impact to-date, as most of the planned work is scheduled for winter. We will be reviewing delivery mechanisms again considering the latest restrictions. We are in touch with National Grid who are reviewing delivery across all LEIs.

6.11. West Dorset Rivers & Coastal Streams

Background: A community-led project to improve the condition of the River Asker. Funded by the Dorset Governance Group (delivering the Catchment Based Approach in Dorset), Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset AONB and the Environment Agency. Annual budget: £35,000. Delivered in partnership with the Dorset Wildlife Trust and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest along with community members of Lodgers, Uploders and Askerswell along with farmers and land managers.

- a. Prior to Covid-19 restrictions being imposed, we had engaged Westcountry Rivers Trust to look at the feasibility of easing fish passage at Lodgers Weir, as this is the main reason the watercourse is failing Water Framework Directive standards. We are working with the landowners immediately surrounding the weir to ensure that they are happy with our proposals.
- b. On-the-ground delivery has been delayed by Covid 19. Partner delivery staff were on furlough. These are now back in post, and work has recommenced. There has been no impact on most deliverables as it is winter-based work. However, we do not anticipate delivering all the fish pass outcomes due to partner furloughs and the unavailability of landowners during the height of the pandemic. We will deliver this as soon as we are able to but are unsure of timing.
- c. During Covid restrictions focus has been spent on increasing resources for rivers projects. We have, in partnership with DWT and FWAG, secured £20k per annum funding from Wessex Water to continue delivery Dorset Wild Rivers, which will now include West Dorset. This is for 5 years. These funds will allow better coordination of activities.
- d. We have also applied for funding from the Environment Agency through their Water Environment Improvement Fund. The application has been fronted by DWT as Local Authorities are not eligible. It is for £15k this financial year, to undertake consultation in the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Stream area to identify issues of importance to local communities. We will find out if we have been successful shortly. In tandem with this, we are working with Char Valley Parish Council to establish a community based rivers project for the Char, based on our successful model on the River Asker. Community engagement will take place this winter.

6.12. Farming for the Nation

The Dorset AONB is one of 12 AONBs that have successfully submitted plans to deliver a test and trial of the new Environmental Land Management System. Funding is from Defra and is close to £1m for all AONBs, with £67,000 allocated for Dorset. The project will be delivered in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest, Dorset Environmental Records Centre and a number of farmers and

land managers in four Landscape Character Areas within the AONB. The aim is to test how we can get the aspirations set out in our management plan into a spatial land management targeting document at a landscape scale and then into a farm-scale management plan. The test started in January 2020 and run for 18 months.

- a. We are finalising our Strategic Landscape Plan that sets out where investment should take place through ELMS to improve the delivery of ecosystem services. Over December, January and February we will be undertaking nine farm walks to test whether this approach works for farmers.
- b. We are also exploring what should be included in good guidance for managing scrub on chalk downland. This is with farmers in South Purbeck.

6.13. [Dorset Food & Drink](#)

- a. Continued promotion of the sector online
- b. Establishment of close partnership with Dorset Farmers' Market and roll-out of mini-markets across the county to enable re-start of trading
- c. To address Covid impacts (see 4) intend to directly fund staff costs while alternative income streams are developed including:
 - developing new membership products (online)
 - making a short-term bid for funds to support a community-led 'Dorset Menu' idea supported by a local philanthropist
 - Linking this to development of a bigger bid to e.g. Esme Fairbairn for a sustainable food programme – education, closer links with Farmers' Market, arts,
 - Seeking LEP support for our sector support role (we made a previous bid to deliver a LEP-sponsored Peer Network, but this was not awarded to us); also a possible partnership with a SW public procurement initiative
- d. The summer pop up markets and partnership with the Dorset Farmers Market (DFM) presented an opportunity to give DF&D members the space and confidence to get back out on the market scene, and for the public to support and buy from local producers. Pitch fees were reduced to help members get back on their feet. DF&D popped up at Bridport, Borough Gardens - Dorchester, Nothe Fort -Weymouth and Bere Regis.
- e. To help extend the season of pop up markets, the DF&D Coordinator contacted the DATPC offering mini pop ups at towns and villages. Although we did not in the end have capacity to visit during the summer as planned, we now have database of contacts and are planning to roll out a new offer for 2021. Since the first lockdown, the appetite and support for local food and drink producers has increased. We are working on ways to meet that demand, shape an innovate offer and deliver a well thought out customer focused outcome.
- f. Many Dorset Food and Drink members had success at the Great Taste Awards 2020. See the full list of Dorset winners here and the Clipper Teas winning brews here.
- g. With the November lockdown, DF&D are once again compiling and updating lists of members lockdown, takeaway, click and collect and isolation box offers.

6.14. [Wild Purbeck Partnership](#)

- a. The Wild Purbeck partnership continues to meet three times a year, to discuss projects related to the management of Purbeck.
- b. At the November meeting (delay due to Covid-19 and officer not yet in post), the partnership were updated on the following projects: **Bere Heath Project, NNR management plan, Purbeck Facilitation Group & ELMS test/trial, Wytch Farm LAE Fund, Sustainable Swanage and Litter Free Coast and Sea Project and Corfe Valley vision.**

- c. Discussion centred around the **NNR/Funding updates as well as the role of the Wild Purbeck Partnership**. The importance of the Wild Purbeck Partnership was relayed by attendees and how the NNR collaboration is an exemplar for partnership working. Additional discussion on remaining focused as well as ideas of how to include representative from local community groups.
- d. The [Purbeck Heaths NNR](#) was chosen as the venue from which Defra and Natural England [launched](#) the national [Nature Recovery Network](#) Delivery Partnership on 5th November. While the launch had to be virtual due to covid-19 restrictions, Purbeck got a significant amount of coverage including from Environment Minister Rebecca Pow MP, who said *“Purbeck exemplifies what can be achieved when people come together in partnership”*. It also features in the [5-minute launch film](#).

6.15. **Dorset Downs & Vales Conservation Forum**

In partnership with Natural England colleagues, a wider group of interested conservation partners has been convened with a view to establishing a conservation forum with a Dorset Downs & Vales geographical focus, to replicate the best of the Wild Purbeck Partnership. It is chaired by Tom Munro. The Forum met in September covering

- a. Green Recovery Challenge Fund
- b. Natural England’s Nature Recovery Network Seedcorn Funding
- c. Dorset AONB DEFRA Tests & Trials

PROJECTS: THOSE RELATED TO MANAGMENT PLAN CHAPTER “EXPLORING, UNDERSTANDING, ENGAGING”

6.16. [Stepping into Nature](#)

Stepping into Nature is an award-winning project funded by the National Community Lottery Fund till March 2023, facilitating nature-based activities for an older audience coupled with a rigorous Public Health assessment of participants’ wellbeing.

Delivery:

- a. 2017-2020 [Evaluation Impact report](#) published
- b. 278 people have received free Autumn connection book developed in first round of funding to assist connection to nature through poetry, conversation.
- c. How to training guides and processes report in development for communities to develop their own activities on a local level.

Variations due to Covid-19

- d. Limited opportunity to deliver direct nature-based activities due to Covid 19 but funding from National Lottery is still secure, with agreement in developing online/at home resources for target audience.
- e. Many planned activities now available as online/ requestable hard copy for target audience.
- f. Funding has been reallocated to delivery online/at home resources that can be used for the remainder of the project, redirecting resources to develop materials required for delivery across the lifetime of the project.
- g. A virtual Picnic in the Parks is now in development and will be launching later this year with a selection of activities from various organisations.
- h. Underspend from 2020/21 will be carried over to 2021/22 in line with National Community Lottery guidelines.

Covid-19 impacts

- i. With Covid 19 restrictions on shielding we have not been able to directly delivery nature-based activities but are developing a virtual Picnic in the Parks platform. Launching in November this will be an interactive platform where people can participate in free online activities or download at home nature connection packs.
- j. Stage 2 LGA funding was delayed until Oct 2nd for the development of the Health & Nature Dorset collaboration, in turn delaying recruitment of P/T person for assisting developing community engagement for collaboration to widen nature-based wellbeing opportunities.
- k. 10 funded Picnic in the Parks cancelled but a proportion of this funding allocated to development of online virtual Picnic in the Parks platform.
- l. Limited capacity of partners due to redirecting resources to Covid requirements or staff furlough has delayed network growth.

6.17. **Visitor Management steering input**

- a. Sally is part of a team tasked with appointing interpretation experts and agreeing design and content in the redevelopment of the interpretation for the Roman Town House in Dorchester, as part of a scheme to improve access and engagement to the site. Dorchester is a key gateway to the AONB and the Roman Town House links to other cultural and historical sites within the AONB.
- b. Sally is a board member of the Dorset Tourism Association representing Dorset AONB and the Jurassic Coast Trust. The Board continues to meet regularly, with the main focus over the past few months on addressing issues raised by Covid-19 and its ongoing effects on tourism and visitor management
- c. Sally continues to attend Litter Free Dorset / Litter Free Coast & Sea Working Group meetings and contributes and advises on visitor management and other issues

6.18. **Jurassic Coast Visitor Management**

- a. Sally continues to deliver the Jurassic Coast Visitor Management role as described in the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Management Plan on behalf of Dorset Council and Devon County Council.

6.19. **Jurassic Coast visitor welcome: West Bay signage**

Background: Coastal Communities funded project to reduce, rationalise and improve safety and community/ visitor interpretation in West Bay. £15,000

- a. Safety signs: Designers/ fabricators have been appointed and work is under way to put in place 8 new signs at key access points, removing the old signs which were faded and often illegible. The locations of most of the signs have been changed, in liaison with the Harbour Master, so that they are more noticeable to people accessing the beaches and less intrusive on the views. In most cases, this has meant moving the signs back into car parks or early access points, before people are actually on the crest of the beach. The content has been approved by the RNLI. The new signs will include dog and litter free information, thus combining three separate signs into one
- b. Any remaining funds will go towards decluttering signage in other locations in West Bay, including West Bay Road car park and play area.

6.20. **Jurassic Coast visitor welcome: Kimmeridge interpretation and access improvements**

Background: partnership project with Dorset Wildlife Trust, Smedmore Estate, Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset Council, Natural England, MoD, and Etches Collection. Aim: to address access and footpath issues; remove interpretation clutter and provide new improved interpretation; and create an improved visitor experience by better connecting Kimmeridge village with the Bay. Funding: £20,000 Wytch Farm, £11,000 Dorset Coastal Connections and £5,000 in kind.

- a. Sally co-ordinating interpretation side of the project. Site meetings have taken place and agreement on type and location of interpretation, plus that which is to be removed (decluttering). Designers and sign fabricators to be appointed, and content to be agreed with partners.

6.21. [Jurassic Coast visitor welcome: Fleet panels](#)

Discussions took place with Dorset Countryside and Ilchester Estate pre lockdown about replacing old and out of date panels along the Fleet. No progress as yet.

6.22. **Sustainable travel: Interpretation improvements and promotion**

- a. A series of walks in Dorset AONB from bus stops have been added to the website and can be seen [here](#)
- b. Interpretation at Honiton station- promotion of sustainable travel (bus, bike and walking) from the station to the Jurassic Coast, East Devon AONB and Dorset AONB (the West Dorset part). Funded by the Devon & Cornwall Community Rail Partnership. No progress yet as low priority during Covid-19 crisis while use of public transport discouraged
- c. Purbeck station interpretation improvements work in partnership with Purbeck Community Rail Partnership planned for 2020: raising awareness of AONB, JC and encouraging sustainable bus/ rail travel – no progress due to Covid-19
- d. The promotion of the four YouTube videos created by *All the Stations* documentary team promoting train/bus travel to East Devon and West Dorset has been put on hold for same reasons as above.

PROJECTS: THOSE RELATED TO MANAGMENT PLAN CHAPTER “PLANING FOR LANDSCAPE QUALITY”

6.23. [Low Carbon Dorset](#)

- a. Low Carbon Dorset is a programme of activities designed to help stimulate growth in Dorset’s low carbon economy and reduce its carbon footprint.
 - The programme offers free technical support and grant funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to businesses, public-sector and community organisations in Dorset.
 - It aims to help Dorset based organisations to improve energy efficiency, increase the use of renewable energy, and aid the development of new low carbon products.
 - The programme is led by Dorset Council (DC) and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
- b. Summary of activity:
 - Received 384 applications for support
 - Awarded 98 grants totalling £2.3m
 - Supported 110 Dorset based SMEs through either 12 hours support or a grant of a minimum of £1k
- c. So far support & funding from the Low Carbon Dorset programme has/will* contribute to: (*some of these projects are contracted but not yet completed, grants have been awarded from Low Carbon Dorset but works have not yet begun)
 - £5.4m of investment in low-carbon projects in Dorset
 - An annual carbon reduction of 4,075 tonnes of CO₂e in Dorset
 - The installation of 3.5 MW of renewable energy capacity in Dorset
 - Improvements in the energy efficiency of 55 houses in Dorset

- The development of 3 new low carbon products in Dorset
 - The reduction of energy used in public-sector buildings by 267,713 kwh/yr
- d. Programme updates:
- This month saw the Local Government Chronicles Awards, for which Low Carbon Dorset was shortlisted in the Environmental Services category. The event was held virtually due to current covid restrictions. Unfortunately the team didn't win, but we were really proud to have been shortlisted.
 - At the start of this year the Council submitted a bid to secure an additional funding from the ERDF. Approved in early November, it makes available an additional £5.4m to extend the delivery of the programme for a further 2 years. More details on the extension can be viewed in the attached press release.

6.24. Wytch Farm Landscape & Access Enhancement Fund

- The funding panel met on in July and October 2020
- Grants have been awarded to a total of 5 projects (1 for Access, 3 for Biodiversity, 1 for Landscape)
 - Beaver reintroduction feasibility: £42,400 awarded to National Trust to secure continuation of the feasibility project, including deep consultation with all stakeholders, release programme design and licence application.
 - Destination Kimmeridge: car-free access improvements (additional £5,000) for access improvements and interpretation
 - Lower Bushey Farm (£20,476.30) for Phase 3 of their hedgerow and woodland enhancement project
 - Rempstone Farm (£13,085.12) for Phase 2 of their hedgerow restoration, creation and improvements
 - Currenden farm (£8,403.20) for their hedgerow planting and restoration project
- With new officer Caroline Kelly in post, the fund will be better promoted and supported. Caroline is pursuing some proactive work to prioritise investments according to the fund's least subscribed aims.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

- 6.25. The funding panel was pleased to support the creation of a film to be released on January 21st 2021. [This Good Earth](#) is beautifully shot by Robert Golden, largely in West Dorset. The film brings together farmers, scientists, ecologists and expert academics to examine the related crises of food production, human health and environmental quality.



ITEM 7: BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022 BUDGET HEADLINES

ITEM FOR	Decision	REPORT BY	AONB Manager
SUMMARY	In the 2015 Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced protected budgets for AONBs & National Parks. While not yet confirmed, it is expected that Defra's commitment to the Dorset AONB for 2021-2022 is the same as in the current year, potentially index-linked (£247,438 in 20-21). Defra expects the local authority to maintain its contribution (£54,510 in 20-21). This item outlines the proposed allocation of these funds and those from the AONB's contributing Local Authorities.		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	This item covers all AONB finance for 2021-2022		
RECOMMENDATION	The Board approves the proposed budget and funding priorities for next financial year		

7.1. HM Treasury 2015 Autumn Statement

The then Chancellor, George Osborne, announced budget protection for AONBs and National Parks. Defra committed to providing Dorset AONB £235,840 in 2017-2018, £239,896 in 2018-2019 and £244,022 in 2019-2020 subject to funds being available on an annual basis. Following the Glover Review, a one-year inflation-proofed flat settlement for 2020-2021 was agreed. A multi-year settlement was expected for 2022 onwards, but the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to lead to another single-year settlement stemming from the budget expected on November 25th. It is expected that Defra will maintain its contributions at current levels, although we have been warned that there is significant competition for funds at this time.

7.2. AONB Budget structure & Defra guidance

The AONB budget is split into 3 areas: core, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Projects. Funds from Defra, our majority funding partner, are provided according to the 'single pot guidance' as set out below.

a. CORE: Core Functions are critical to the successful operation of AONB Partnerships.

Within core functions it is to be expected that staffing and associated overheads should merit particular protection. As set out in the Defra grant offer letter the grant offer includes a maximum contribution to core funding of 75% and is conditional on AONB Partnerships securing match funding of a further 25% of core funding from other sources. It is hoped and expected that Local Authority partner contributions to all Core Functions continue at a minimum of 25%, or even at the same levels that have previously been invested.

Contributions from bodies other than local authority partners and/or earned income can be used to support core functions; this would release Defra-origin funds for other activity. Core Functions are defined in the Defra MoA and as such provide guidance on minimum standards to allow successful operation of an AONB unit and the delivery of the AONB Management Plan.

b. SDF: The SDF was established as a Ministerial initiative and has political support. Defra believes the previous success of SDF will ensure its continuation in a meaningful way without the need to impose minimum levels of spending, which would go against the ethos of an interdependent and trusting relationship with AONB Partnerships. Individual SDF initiatives will be identified as part of an AONB's programme of work. SDF will remain as a visible funding stream in the AONB family and should continue to be recorded and good practice registered to inform Defra and key partners. There are opportunities to use SDF to add value by encouraging greater uptake of innovative, often community-based, projects. The SDF programme has associated guidance prepared by Natural England which steers the kinds of projects to be developed. This guidance was revised in 2009 to place greater emphasis on encouraging innovation and risk-taking, as well as meeting AONB Management Plan objectives. These risk and

innovation elements help clarify the distinction between SDF and other funding streams. Innovative SDF projects should be assessed from local, regional and national perspectives. We make SDF available to projects through a competitive process.

- c. **PROJECTS:** AONB Partnerships are free to determine how they use resources to deliver projects. If 100% AONB project funding is the only way to achieve the desired outcome, this is for the Partnerships to decide in developing their programme. Defra believes that delivery of AONB Management Plan objectives is generally greater and more sustainable if undertaken in partnership, particularly for large scale or landscape scale projects. It therefore encourages all AONB Partnerships to use their project funding to help lever in additional resources. The ability and willingness of partners to contribute to projects will be variable from partner to partner and from year to year. It is recognised that staffing costs can be met by project funding.

7.3. INCOME FORECAST

The Dorset AONB’s Local Authorities are intending to maintain their contributions in transition to becoming part of Dorset Council. The team also has an external fundraising target.

Total “single pot” income via the Dorset Council & Defra:

	Source	2021-2022
LA & Treasury income	Defra TOTAL	£ 247,500
	Dorset Council	£ 54,510
	reserve	£ 6,584
	Other income (NLHF for 60th)	£ 30,000
	TOTAL non-Defra income	£ 91,094
	TOTAL	£ 338,594

7.4. CORE COSTS

Efforts continue to ‘projectise’ a reasonable proportion of the team’s overheads depending on any restrictions imposed by the funding body: all projects make a contribution towards accommodation at a minimum.

Maximum core costs are 4 times the non-Defra income; our projected costs are less.

	Cost heading	£
Core costs	<i>Core staff salaries, ENI & pension</i>	£ 235,948
	<i>Travel & training</i>	£ 7,300
	<i>Accommodation & office equipment</i>	£ 6,000
	<i>Partnership running costs</i>	£ 3,000
	<i>Communication, outreach etc, inc forum & AONB 60th outreach programme</i>	£ 35,000
	<i>Monitoring research & guidance</i>	£ 2,000
	CORE TOTAL	£ 289,248
To projects	Projects & SDF	£ 49,346
	TOTAL BUDGET	£ 338,594

7.5. PROJECTS & SDF

The difference between the projected core costs and total single pot income is just over £49,000.

