



Dorset AONB Partnership
 Hosted by Dorset Council
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Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, Tuesday 22nd November 2022

At County Hall, Dorchester

Draft minutes

Organisation	Representative	Status	2022-11
Independent chairman	Dr Phil Sterling	Voting member	Present
Council for the Protection of Rural England	Dr Guy Dickinson	Voting member	Present
Country Land and Business Association	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Cllr Peter Bowyer	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Cllr Chris Turner	Voting member	Present
Dorset Council	Cllr Ray Bryan	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Cllr Jane Somper	Voting member	Present
Dorset Council	Cllr Roland Tarr	Voting member	Present
Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership	Luke Rake	Voting member	Present
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society	Jeremy Pope	Voting member	Present
Environment Agency	Keith Calder	Voting member	Apologies
Forestry Commission	Roly Boughton	Voting member	Apologies
Historic England	Ross Simmonds	Voting member	
National Farmers' Union	Robert Lasseter	Voting member	Present
Natural England	Robert Lloyd	Voting member	Present
The National Trust	Hannah Jefferson	Voting member	Present
Dorset Race Equalities Council	Nathalie Sherring	Voting member	Present
Jurassic Coast Trust	Lucy Culklin	Attending member	Present
Purbeck Heritage Network	Brian Bleese	Attending member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Giles Nicholson	Supporting Officer	Present
Dorset Council	Hilary Jordan	Supporting Officer	
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Maria Clarke	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Country Land and Business Association	Elliot Hutt	Supporting Officer	Apologies
National Farmers' Union	Gemma Harvey	Supporting Officer	Present
LAF	Janet Davis	Supporting Officer	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Neil Wedge	Supporting Officer	

DAONB Team: Tom Munro (AONB Manager), Sally King (Visitor, Tourism & Access Manager), Steph Aburrow (Stepping into Nature), Julie Hammon (Stepping into Nature), Jill Hearing (Reconnecting the Ridgeway Project Officer), Richard Brown (Landscape Planning Officer), Caroline Kelly (Wild Purbeck Project Coordinator), Caroline Richards (Dorset Food & Drink), Sue Dampney (Culture, Communications & Learning Officer), Rachel Janes (FIPL Officer), Emma Russell (FIPL Support Officer), Kate Townsend (Project Support Officer).

Guests: Paul Hamnett & Katherine Wingate (National Grid VIP)

Welcome, introductions and apologies

Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

Cllr Roland Tarr paid tribute to Michael Dower who recently passed away. A minute's silence was held in respect.

In sending his apologies, Brian Blease told the board that the Purbeck Heritage Network is no longer a functional organisation. He requested that board members consider bringing Dorset Wildlife Trust onto the board instead.

It was put to the board that DWT should be invited to become full members of the board, and this was agreed.

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held in May 2022 were agreed as a true record. No matters arising.

2. Partners' 90 second updates

- a. JPope (DNHAS): No longer trustee for Dorset Museum but continues to represent them at present. The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on no. of visitors. This will be addressed at AGM - 2nd week of December. Discussion ongoing with N-Grid as to where the archaeological discoveries from the undergrounding site should be housed; either at the museum or distributed around the country.
- b. LCulkin (JCT): New digital platform soft launched in Sept, full launch planned for Jan 2023 at annual event, alongside launch of Coastal Conservation Fund. A feasibility study is being launched for a new Heritage Centre for which a consultation is going out to tender imminently. 20th anniversary celebrations commenced in the summer; they'll end in Jan. Partnership Plan update will be published before Christmas. Reshaping the PAC into more of an open forum starting from Jan 2023.
- c. CTurner (DAPTC) Beaminster Earth Alliance is an active, local environmental group working to increase recycling and tree planting etc in the local area. Tribute paid to Michael Dower.
- d. PBowyer (DAPTC): 1. Strong, clear support for AONB from parish and town councils; 2. Healthy scepticism towards protection of birds in Poole Harbour and tourism aims for Purbeck Heaths NNR; 3. Concern over concepts used such as sustainability, net gain / growth, impractical terms with the potential to raise tension for the AONB and its communities; 4. Concern over Dorset Local Plan: denial from some councillors & officers that we don't have 'exceptional circumstances' here in Dorset, if Dorset area is not exceptional then where is? Transformative times – farming, labour and energy and must be thought through carefully; 5. Strong support expressed for development of rural skills and Kingston Maurward College.
- e. GDickinson (CPRE): Mentioned concern at the Littlemoor housing approval (500 houses); Crupton solar farm refused; concern over the 1000ac solar farm proposed around Chickerell.
- f. GNicholson (DC): The Natural Environment is the top DC priority, however struggling with budget. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is in its final draft and will be published next year. Cut & collect of verges is expanding; Dorset seen as a national leader. Ash dieback & the removal of dangerous trees is having a big effect on the budget.
- g. LRake (LEP / KMC): LEP is undergoing radical changes & now has a business engagement role, so may need to rethink role on this board. KMC - higher education / university centre will be offering courses from September and looking for businesses and partners to join the centre. LNP – doing good work and welcome partners involvement.
- h. RLasseter (NFU): Privileged to be chair of KMC, a really important institute for future generations. NGrid VIP reinstatement of landscape has not been done as agreed as yet & inspection chambers not in field boundaries. Proposed new solar park needs robust debate, we should consider inviting the developers to a PB meeting to discuss proposal. It will increase net gain and panels are time limited.
- i. GHarvey (NFU): Uncertainty for farmers as we develop own domestic policy, ELMS remain up in the air. Need a scheme to give balanced confidence given the economic uncertainty of the times. Increase in avian Influenza means there is a countrywide housing order on poultry.
- j. CllrJSomper: Asked GNicholson about ash dieback comms messaging to public – GN unsure. CllrRTarr has noticed when cycling that large areas of woodland affected by it. GN – some ash trees are resistant but can't stop it progressing. IRees: we are developing a community project which could assist in new planting. PSterling: research taking place – will bring results to next board meeting.

- k. HJefferson (NT) Trust are spending more on ash dieback than anticipated. Jurassic Coast Nature Recovery Network project under way. Coastal run off is a problem, especially at Hive Beach so getting consultants into propose possible solutions. Thank you for FiPL grants for projects at Eggardon & blossom hedges around Seatown and Golden Cap. Developing a woodland project at Langdon Wood/Golden Cap, could present this at next PB meeting. Wessex Hillforts & Habitats project has been nominated for an award. There will be more staffing resources & a parking meter at Ringstead next year (Apr-Sept).
- l. RLloyd (NE) Staff very busy with Countryside Stewardship Schemes (20) and extending higher level scheme agreements. Uncertainty remains around ELMS. Developing a project along the coastal strip with the Jurassic Coast Nature Recovery Network partners. At Purbeck Heaths NNR the pigs have learnt to cross cattle grids, eagles seen regularly, there's 4 captive sets of beavers and awaiting guidance on wild release.
- m. WBond (CLA / DLNP): Avian flu is here and real. Concern that the cost of living crisis will mean a greater demand for cheap food and less concern for environment. Poole Harbour nitrate group making good progress but held back by logistics and lack of a working model.
- n. NSherring (DREC): Undertaken diversity training with AONB Team and working on a bid with the HLF and Dorset Food & Drink around a natural environment project. Moving onto a new regional role, replacement not yet appointed. Thanked everyone.
- o. JDavis (Local Access Forum): Can offer advice on Rights of Way issues and will be commenting on draft ROWIP next week, in particular concerns around youth access to the countryside.

3. Delivering the AONB Management Plan

TM presented on AONB team delivery report. Team members updated the board additionally

a. Steph Aburrow - Stepping into Nature

Link to presentation [here](#)

This year the team have developed 'Your Seasons of Stories' (YSOS) project to help their target audience connect to nature through different creative resources. The aim of YSOS is to enable people to create their own personal seasonal stories, poetry & artwork. SiN have worked with a professional poet, a storyteller plus 2 visual artists and a videographer to produce a beautiful box of artistic materials, activities and prompts around nature. They are giving these out for free, for use by groups and individuals to spark conversation and creativity around nature. The artists also delivered a series of workshops around the resource, along with a suite of 5 on-line videos. In total 577 people have taken part in 22 workshops and 900 boxes have been handed out. The materials are also available as downloads from the [Picnic in the Parks website](#) and Library App. Feedback received about the resources has overwhelmingly positive. The artists who have taken part are also keen to continue working together and develop future projects.

b. Ian Rees – Nature Recovery Plan

Link to presentation [here](#)

In 2019 the team committed to producing a Nature Recovery Plan in response to the NAAONB Colchester Declaration. It fits in with government targets on nature restoration and builds upon our own habitat mapping and DEFRA test & trials project data. This new set of data and maps will be a useful tool for planners, developers, farmers, land-managers and local communities. We have set ourselves a target of increasing semi-natural habitat from 21% to 40% of the Dorset AONB (above the government target of 30%). We have mapped 4 semi-natural habitat types – grassland, woodlands, wetland, and heathlands – and how species currently move through the landscape types along with the future opportunities for habitat expansion. This has been done AONB-wide, but also then drilled down into the key data for the 35 landscape character areas which will be useful for local parishes. The plan should be complete by Christmas as a 'dynamic' document, partners will be consulted on it and feedback welcomed.

4. Paul Hamnett - National Grid Visual Impact Scheme (VIP) update

This scheme is 1 of 5 VIP schemes in the UK, the first to finish and has provided the team with knowledge which they will carry with them to future schemes. There have been huge engineering challenges for the team due to the steep terrain and a surprisingly vast amount of archaeological remains uncovered (still being documented). The pylons have now come down and the only remains are link pillars for maintenance of the cables and sealing end compounds at the north & south ends of the site. The reinstatement of land is on-going but has now stopped for the season. There might be some run-off issues when the defences come out.

- a. CllrTarr: Consultation was very good but there were some glitches with telephone masts, will that be factored into future projects? PHamnett: Yes, we have a long list of lessons learnt from Dorset which will take into future schemes.
- b. RLasseter: Morgan Sindall have been very good. Still ongoing life in the project, especially for landowners as there is still landscaping & fencing to be done on the ground. All excited to see archaeological discoveries. PHamnett: Guarantee re-instatement will take place.
- c. JPope: In touch with Stuart Fox to decide where finds will be displayed at either Dorset Museum or elsewhere in the country.
- d. CllrTurner: How did the roads cope with the heavy vehicles? PHamnett: In general they coped well as a special low loader from Belgium was used to limit impact.
- e. H Jefferson: there have been wider benefits too e.g. LEI funding for projects
- f. IRees: Are there any public perception surveys planned? KWingate: Looking into it. Grateful for the feedback had so far. IRees: This will be useful to you in the long term, and useful to us too.
- g. HJefferson: The National Trust have applied for funding to provide some interpretation boards on the site.
- h. CllrTarr: lots of positive anecdotal feedback about the scheme.
- i. PSterling: AONB team could produce a statement for NGrid about the team's experience and appreciation of impact.

RESOLUTION:

The Board approves and notes the progress made towards delivering the AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

5. AONB Business Plan budget headlines 2022-23

TM presented the paper. DEFRA 2022 settlement increased but so have the costs of the team (mainly staff costs). DC cannot increase their core contribution but TM is confident the team can lever in other funding sources to compensate for this. Based on the statement presented TM proposed to submit a request to DEFRA for the next financial year accordingly.

Comments:

- a) WBond: Hope DEFRA will continue to core fund, being open to finding other sources of funding is very important too in this climate.

RESOLUTION:

The Dorset AONB Board approve the proposed budget and funding priorities for the next financial year.

6. AONB Management Plan Review timetable

TM presented the paper. Lord Benyon has written to advise all AONBs who are reviewing Management Plans in 2023/24 to hold back and await publication of new outcome-based targets in January 2023 and new guidance in Spring 2023 before doing so. This applies to the Dorset AONB Management Plan which is currently due to be re-written and published in 2023.

The recommendation has been approved by the AONB Steering Group, who advise we request the full extension of time, with a light touch re-write in 2023.

RESOLUTION:

The Dorset AONB Board approve the delay to the major Management Plan review and publication up to December 31st 2025.

7. Sue Dampney - National Landscapes Re-branding

Link to presentation [here](#)

In the Landscapes Review in 2019, Julian Glover proposed a rebrand of AONBs to 'National Landscapes', with new powers, purposes and resources, to ensure that AONBs are recognised equally alongside that of National Parks. He reported our current title can be hindering, misunderstood or not recognised. The Cotswolds AONB have already rebranded to Cotswolds National Landscape but the Dorset AONB has chosen to work collectively alongside the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) on a strategic approach to rebranding for the whole family of AONBs. Mark Sears, Brand Consultant was appointed by the NAAONB Steering Group to research the opportunities and risks of the move to National Landscapes. He recommended that a new vision and values be incorporated to ensure the rebrand is not just a relabelling exercise. It must also allow for local differences. Collectively AONBs feel a key aim of the rebrand is to widen our audience.

With money from DEFRA, 'Nice & Serious' (N&S), a design consultant have recently been appointed by the NAAONB to work on building the brand in collaboration with the AONB family. The NAAONB at their recent AGM ratified the rebrand programme, encouraging its adoption by AONBs at the appropriate time. The new name will not require a legislative change.

Timescales: In Dec the SG will meet with N&S, in Jan N&S will come up with proposals for the rebranding, in Feb regional meetings held to which team & board members will be invited. By the end of April the new resources will be available. NAAONB's have advised DEFRA they will need money for the re-launch to make it successful.

Comments:

- a. PStirling: Feels we are moving towards this so do we want to be part of it? Shall we delegate to SG or discuss as PB.
- b. CllrRTarr: Don't think we should stick with old name but prefer National Landscape Dorset, not other way round.
- c. WBond: Agree with logic, we have National Nature Reserves so we have to go with it. Put Dorset before or after – go with the trend! SDampney: consultants want to make sure it works for everyone and want to gather views in Feb meeting.
- d. PBowyer: A re-brand is a huge business risk and would urge us to think very carefully as words have a meaning. NL is quite bland. Would not want SG to make a decision but consult PB. Recently planning decisions include compromises in status of AONB. We should take a collective decision on this.
- e. CllrRTarr: Could meet on Teams if deadline for decision is before next PB meeting in May 2023.
- f. SDampney: The timeline so far shows this has had wide consultation and has taken time already. As an AONB family we believe it will collectively bring more benefits than disadvantages. We'll remain as AONBs legally but bring a new working name use.
- g. HJefferson: Will there be budget implications for next year? TMunro: These will be covered under existing comms budget and static stuff will be done on a rolling basis. SDampney: There will be a 2-year phasing in period to allow for natural renewal of materials. HJefferson: Lots of places to consider, including partner websites etc
- h. TMunro: We will bring it to the PB either as an extraordinary meeting or to the May 2023 P-board meeting.

8. Any other business

- a. WBond: Very impressive work from the team.
- b. LRake: Thanks to everyone. KMC awarded university course of the year in conservation management.
- c. CllrRTarr: Would like to propose signage for cycle ways is rationalised and simplified, if DC Highways will agree to it. At the moment signage is very cluttered and confusing. Would like to encourage more people to come to cycle in Dorset. SKing: Would support sign decluttering but are some of them on a NCR and needed? GNicholson: Speak to Kevin Humphreys at DC. LRake: Happy to discuss at KMC. PStirling: Could be a recommendation from us, bring to next May's meeting. RTarr: Please notify your PC if you see any rotten fingerpost signs. JPage: Let LAF know too as they may be able to help with funding.
- d. TMunro: It's the DF&D Christmas Fair this weekend and a new publication by Little Toller Press called The Lost Orchards is out which has been supported by a small grant from AONB.

e. P Sterling: Thanks to all partners on the Board and the AONB team.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Dates of next meetings

	Spring	Winter (tbc)
AONB Steering Group	18 th April 2023	17 th October 2023
AONB Partnership Board	25 th May 2023	21 st November 2023

If you wish to have items added to the agenda for the Board, please ensure suggestions are sent to [Tom Munro](#), [Kate Townsend](#) or the [AONB Chairman](#) at least 7 days before the date of the Steering Group meeting which precedes the Board meeting, so they may be considered for timetabling by the that group.