



Dorset AONB Partnership
Hosted by Dorset Council
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Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 10.00am, Tuesday 22nd November 2022. Committee Room 1, County Hall

The meeting will start at 10.00 am sharp; refreshments available from 09.45 am. 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

Chairman's welcome, introduction & apologies

1. Minutes of the last meeting
2. Partner's 2-minute updates
3. Delivering the AONB Management Plan: highlighting Your Seasons of Stories & AONB Nature Recovery Plan (information)

Comfort break

4. National Grid VIP: Dorset undergrounding scheme (information)
5. AONB Business Plan budget headlines 2022-2023 (decision)
6. AONB Management Plan Review timetable (decision)
7. National Landscapes Re-branding (information)
8. Any other business

Proposed dates of next meetings:

Dates of next meetings

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

Anyone wishing to bring an item forward for discussion by 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. This group recommends agenda items to the Chairman for decision.

ITEM 1: DRAFT MINUTES of the Partnership Board meeting 21st May 2021 (virtual)

RECOMMENDATION	The Board agree the minutes as a true representation of the meeting
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Attendance

Organisation	Representative	Status	2022-05
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	Clr Peter Bowyer	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Clr Chris Turner	Voting member	Present
Dorset Council	Clr Ray Bryan	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Clr Jane Somper	Voting member	Present
Dorset Council	Clr Roland Tarr	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership	Luke Rake	Voting member	Apologies
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	
Natural England	Robert Lloyd	Voting member	Present
The National Trust	Hannah Jefferson	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Race Equalities Council	Nathalie Sherring	Voting member	Present
Jurassic Coast Trust	Lucy Culkin	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), 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: Wendy Carmichael (Dorset Council), Tom Clarke (National Trust), Tara Hansford (Dorset Council), Grace Herve (Dorset Wildlife Trust)

Welcome, introductions and apologies

Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, with particular welcome to our guests and new board members.

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held in November 2021 were agreed as correct. No matters arising.

2. Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action

PSterling explained he is part of a group of AONB Chairs convened by the National Association for AONBs, who have collaborated together to produce a [Statement of commitment on Climate Action](#). Set up in response to the Glover Review, and in conjunction with AONB Managers & their teams, they are advocating that by 2024 all AONB Management Plans will contain meaningful measures on climate change mitigation and the adaptation of targets to support Net O. To do this a new Climate Action & Framework Toolkit has been drafted, which covers 5 key areas (Agriculture, Nature-based Solutions, Building Design and Planning, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Tourism and Transport), which AONB Chairs will be raising awareness of throughout the AONB family. PS asked for Partnership Board to support the promotion of the use of the new Toolkit and pledged to make it accessible to all partners to help enable them to prioritize their actions accordingly.

Comments:

- a. PBowyer: - Will there be scalable actions which have impact given that the climate emergency is a consequence of industrial processes? TM: Yes, in particular around agriculture, especially agricultural regeneration and nature recovery effort in the landscape.
- b. WCarmichael: - Is the Toolkit already developed? TM – yes in draft and will share when developed.
- c. Why only AONBs and not Protected Landscapes? Is it inward facing within AONB family? TM – National Parks already have one, so this will put us all on the same footing.

RESOLUTION:

The Board expressed its support for the Statement of Commitment on Climate Action from AONB Chairs and agreed for it to be signed by the AONB Chairman.

3. Delivering the AONB Management Plan

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

Jill Hearing – Greening West Dorset's Hill & Vales

Greening West Dorset's Hills & Vales, funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF), was delivered during April 2021 to March 2022 in partnership with DERC, DWT, FWAG South West, Litter Free Dorset and National Trust. The landscape enhancement targets were met or exceeded within the agreed project budget of £237k.

- 6ha lowland meadow restored using plants and seed of local provenance on 2 farms
- Over 800m of hedgerow laid and restored
- 1763m new hedgerow planted
- 70 hedgerow oaks planted (against target of 24)

- 36 orchard trees planted, including on former orchard sites
- 11 ponds restored, including some with potential for creating habitat for great crested newts
- Invasive non-native species controlled on 1 pond (Parrot's feather) and 12km riverbank (Himalayan balsam)
- 600m of River Asker and River Char restored (against target of 250m) and tree canopy opened up
- Natural flood management interventions undertaken at 5 locations in River Asker and River Char headwaters
- Access improvements completed at Kingcombe National Nature Reserve, including new signs and interpretation boards, restored boardwalk, bridge & benches
- Engaged over 300 people in producing litter and river action plans
- 10 SNCIs surveyed and management statements produced

Monitoring data collected and report completed by DERC, the impacts of which will be revisited next year.

Tom Munro – Purbeck Heaths Wilder Grazing Unit Project

This project to create a 1370ha single grazing unit on the Purbeck Heaths NNR allows for wilder grazing of ponies, cattle, pigs, sika and beavers - our ecosystem engineers. Funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF), this project was delivered during April 2021 to March 2022 in partnership with RSPB / NT and NE to a total budget of just over £1m (of which £800k came from the GRCF).

Infrastructure – internal fencing removed and over 20km of new fencing installed, 2km of ditch & bank work undertaken, parking areas rationalised & improved, 8km of roadside ditching undertaken. Sustainable Tourism – workshops and events were held and experts The Travel Foundation commissioned to help create a [Sustainable Tourism Plan](#), in consultation with local stakeholders - launched in March. In total 14 new interpretation signs have been installed, a [new guide](#) to the area produced and a fantastic visitor [website](#) have been created – all of which we'd love partners to promote. Find out more about the project [here](#)

Rachel Janes – Farming in Protected Landscapes

There are 2 years remaining to complete FIPL, a rolling grant programme with funds of £1 million to spend over a 3-year period on climate, nature, people and place projects, targeting the farmed environment as key beneficiary. There is a good spread of projects across the AONB, 41 in total, which are benefitting farms and importantly making & nurturing new contacts. In relation to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies, 5km of hedgerow has been planted, 6 projects are tackling soil improvement, and 13 projects have been delivered on SNCIs. Examples of Place projects include mapping Sarsen Stones, and People projects include support to set up a Forest School at Coppett Hill Farm. Further information and case studies can be found on the [website](#). The next steps are to secure funding for 2024 and beyond.

Comments:

- a. JSomper: Social prescribing can vary across GP practises, what is the level of take up and what can be done to amplify the message. JHammond – we are working with Thriving Communities and supporting providers through grant funds to provide activities. JS highlighted a gap in the Stakeholder Panel, will link in with JH.

RESOLUTION:

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

4. Update on the Dorset Council Climate & Ecological Emergency Plan. Presentation by Wendy Carmichael

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

WC explained how the DC Climate & Emergency Strategy (which aims to achieve a carbon neutral Council by 2040, and County by 2050) is performing. There are 41 objectives covering 9 areas, of which many actions are underway. The pandemic made a positive difference within DC, in particular in relation to building emissions and travel. Other areas in which carbon emissions are reducing include highways, streetlights and green spaces.

However internally there have been some governance issues, a lack of budget and resources and a lack of baseline data. To address this a new Corporate Director has been appointed, coupled with a new capital works fund and internal governance system meaning the team will be refocusing their actions & objectives by using a new 'road map' to focus on delivering targets. In particular the team will be focusing on the Ecological Emergency. The team want to link in with experts and develop new partnerships, thus WC encouraged board members to link in with her team and to [email](#) her.

5. Engaging Communities in Climate Action. Presentation by Tom Clarke

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

In 2019 NT liaised with Parish Councils in the Purbeck area around positive action they could take to help address the Climate Emergency. This was a different approach as instead of asking what the NT could do, they prompted conversations around collective action they could take. Various PC's eg. Langton, Swanage, Corfe - created their own local action groups, with background support from the NT. Virtual meetings commenced during the pandemic, these created a feeling of equality, and during this time 'Planet Purbeck' was formed in response to nationwide sentiment for climate action. An enthusiastic, committed group, it now has over 70 volunteers and 800 supporters and has reached into areas of the community that the NT have struggled to reach. As well as a festival and a growing youth group, they are looking at some of the bigger issues such as sea grass restoration and beaver reintroduction, working alongside organisations such as NT/RSPB etc. They've forged some strong relationships, including with the Ministry of Justice. There has been a culture shift within Purbeck, a feeling that they can set their sights high and achieve their ambitions.

Comments:

- a. P Sterling: Could this be rolled out elsewhere? TC – this is transforming the way the NT thinks about engagement, behavioural change
- b. WBond: Noticed people are frustrated and instead of complaining they want to get involved and do something.
- c. P Sterling: Could it be rolled out to West Dorset? TM – can help & support if the right conditions arise as they did for Planet Purbeck, we can promote it, but can't push it on people. PS – we can be facilitators.
- d. CKelly: Planet Purbeck Youth Group have joined with Swanage Eco Group at the School – and have 12 students joined, an inspiring number.
- e. PBowyer: need to develop a strategic approach for seasonality, and how we manage and protect our local areas for local people. Work needs to be done by lots of organisations around this.
- f. P Sterling: DAONB are well placed to help with this challenge, if we receive an uplift from DEFRA we will invest more in trying to understand & articulate the issue of Sustainable Tourism.

6. 2020-2021 AONB Partnership Accounts

TM presented the paper.

RESOLUTION:

The Dorset AONB Board commends the funding leverage demonstrated by these accounts

7. Landscapes Review Consultation

TM briefly presented the DAONB response to Landscapes Review Consultation. An addition was made to the first draft following evidence submitted by DAONB board member Jeremy Pope, in relation to Question 14 around giving authorities additional powers to restrict motor vehicle usage on byways. See our full response [here](#)

Comments: -

JPope: explained that the Roman Road nr West Compton is being used inappropriately by 4x4s and motorbikes in large numbers, worrying livestock and damaging the fabric of this byway, plus disturbing the peace and quiet of the area, and generally not being used in the way it was designed for.

TM: we've taken these negative issue of land management, along with additional feedback and have supported the proposal in Question 14.

JPope: there is also the issues of dogs not being kept under control, eg at Eggardon – cattle chased by dog and was killed

Discussion (TM, CTurner, WBond, Pbowyer, SKing): need to promote dog control; options open to farmers; likely increase in dog numbers as Dorset population/housing grows; climate impacts of food supply to dogs; environmental impacts of dog waste.

8. Dorset Peatland Partnership. Presentation by Grace Herve (for support)

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

GH explained this project comes under the umbrella of the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, a government investment into the Climate Emergency, being delivered by NE through 'Discovery & Restoration Grants' over a 4 year period. In September 2021 the Dorset Catchment Partnership were awarded £147K, from which the 'Dorset Peat Partnership' has been formed. It's made up of a range of partners and is looking for more – including organisations on the DAONB board, councillors and community groups, to filter out messages about the project. It's part of the Government's Climate Strategy – to restore 35ha of degraded peatland by 2023 and reduce greenhouse gases by 2050.

Main peat sites in Dorset are drained mire sites around The Frome, Piddle, B'mouth & Poole area, Stour & Ringwood Forest area. Benefits include carbon sequestration, prevention of floods and increased biodiversity. The grant will be used to assess sites (currently 40 green list sites) which includes Historic Environment Assessments, create an evidence and monitoring plan, calculate carbon benefits, build partnerships and lastly bid in 2023 for a Restoration Grant, to go on and get the work done on the ground. Contact [Grace Herve](#) for further information

Comments:

- a. CTurner: If peat deteriorated, will you re-seed/replant with heather? GH: it is an option, but sites so far are mainly ditches - allowing water/ vegetation to come back to flood plain. TM: In mire there is less heather and more grasses / mosses so if you block drainage it will spread and not need re-seeding.
- b. GHarvey: Have you had much engagement with landowners/Managers as yet and if so the response? GH: Forestry England are keen to progress the work, I'll be going out with RSPB/NT across Purbecks, Not had negative feedback. Urban fringe communities may have concerns eg Canford Heath.
- c. PSterling – West Dorset did have areas of peat and what we learn from this project we need to have available for smaller scale landowners. On a field scale some significant projects could occur. Peat is special but grassland diversification (becoming more botanical) together could make a huge impact on carbon sequestration. Perhaps this is something we could pioneer in Dorset and roll out at a national scale.
- d. TMunro: According to DEFRA data in the Dorset AONB there are 90ha of deep peat and 60,000ha of grassland which could be diversified.
- e. CTurner: Are there any studies on the level of carbon sequestration depending on the type of flora?
- f. PSterling: Yes, in particular international evidence, but need further research into the capacity of grasslands in this country. It's emerging work.

RESOLUTION:

The Dorset AONB Board fully endorses its support for the Dorset Peatland Partnership.

9. Update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). Presentation by Tara Hansford

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

The ROWIP, a statutory plan which all LAs must legally produce, monitor and deliver. It stretches 4684 km in Dorset and is currently under review (RoWIP2). The plan looks at how RoW are managed and maintained, their character and condition, barriers to people using them and ways to improve them, set against a complex legal & environmental background. With many different user groups, RoW are seen as our 'Green Highways' so it is crucial that the RoWIP is kept up to date to reflect changing times. Accessible for all, they bring many benefits, enabling people to get out and connect with nature, experience history & culture both past and present and are enriching. RoW also include Cycle Tracks, other land types such as verges and permissive paths and include the provision for motorised use. The RoWIP is a strategy plan and comprises an Assessment stage leading to an Action Plan, broken up into Delivery Plans which are reviewed annually.

RoWIP 2 is currently in the Assessment phase and consultation has been carried out with many user groups, over 1000 responses received. From this data - woodland/forest has come out as the most popular land type, followed by coast and hillforts. Hard copy maps are still preferred, signage is still an issue for some and there's lots more analysis work to do. However it is recognised that some user groups are under-represented in this data and they are trying to address this.

If you have strategies / plans / relevant work to contribute, please get in touch with [Tara](#).

10. Partners' 90 second updates

- a. JDavis (Local Access Forum): assisting DC with ROW improvement plan, advising them on shared use routes and access islands. Happy to offer advice on RoW issues so please contact us.
- b. NSherring (DREC): hectic couple of years and capacity of team has not grown to absorb this. Working with NT on inclusivity training, and have a training session with AONB Team on June 29th. Interested in discussing how to increase the capacity of the team to cope with the demands, in part around loneliness post Covid, and developing partnership projects around this.
- c. LCulkin (JCT): 12 month review of P-ship plan will be live at the end of the week. New digital platform signed off, new fossil collection code. Relocation of office to DWT Brooklands. A series of 20th Anniversary events are being planned.
- d. JPope (DNHAS): At Dorset Museum the Natural Gallery is proving very popular. A new Hardy's Wessex exhibition is opening soon in the People's Gallery.
- e. WBond (CLA / DLNP): land managers have become more environmentally aware but will this continue with predicted shortages of food? Those that have resisted the movement will be saying how will we do it? A dilemma is therefore playing out, and we cannot deny the problem.
- f. GHarvey (NFU): Challenging times for farmers, against subsidy reductions this year and high input costs which has impacted farmers' business viability and confidence. Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot has had a mixed take up, with increased capital costs some Farmers reluctant to take risks. Farmers looking at efficiencies and diversification of businesses. Resilience essential.
- g. GNicholson (DC): Exciting times – C'side team are at the heart of DC environmental work now in terms of Climate Emergency and Corporate Plan.
- h. GDickinson (CPRE): Campaigning hard on the Local Plan, want fewer houses but enough affordable and social housing for local people, built to environmental standards. More action on Climate & Ecological Emergency. Hoping the AONB team will review smaller planning applications and consider additional financial support towards the cost of fingerpost repairs.
- i. PBowyer (DAPTC): Parishes want safer rural roads, lower speed limits and feel byways incorporated into roadways very dangerous. Concerns around draft proposals of 'Levelling Up' paper which could remove local planning powers and remaining secrecy around the Local Plan consultation

ITEM 3: DELIVERING THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

ITEM FOR	Information	REPORT BY	AONB Team
SUMMARY	The AONB team is leading, coordinating, promoting and supporting delivery of the actions and intent of the AONB Management Plan as the central part of its core duties and through specific projects.		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	Delivery based on agreed budget and business plan.		
RECOMMENDATION	The Board approves and notes the progress made towards delivering the AONB Management Plan 2019-2021		

CORE WORK

3.1. [Providing landscape-related planning advice via the Planning Protocol:](#)

2022-2023 commenced with a similar rate of consultations as seen in the previous year (this being somewhat above levels seen in previous years). In the first six months, almost 100 consultations were received, as compared with a total of 205 the preceding year. There have been some signs of the consultation rate falling since the mid-point of the year, which is understood to reflect an overall decline in planning applications as a result of the wider economic context. Some key events and trends are summarised below:

- a. There continue to be a number of large solar energy proposals, particularly within in the setting of the designated area.
- b. Permissions have been granted for strategic housing allocations in the AONB at Vearse Farm (reserved matters application) and Littlemoor (discharge of conditions in relation to outline approval). An application for reserved matters at Littlemoor has also been submitted and is awaiting determination.
- c. There continues to be significant interest in maintaining/enhancing tourism ventures that were successful during the pandemic, including changing the use of agricultural land to seasonal campsites and expanding/diversifying existing sites to provide upgraded facilities.
- d. There continue to be numerous consultations regarding the management of woodlands, many of which relate to the presence of ash die-back.
- e. The AONB Team participated in the Public Inquiry concerning the refused extension to Chard Junction Quarry. The decision was received at the end of October, with the appeal having been dismissed. The grounds for refusal/dismissal were based on the protection afforded to the AONB in relation to major development proposals, which should only be permitted in exception circumstances. The Inspector found there to be no overriding need and/or public interest to justify granting permission. In reaching this decision the inspector accepted the case presented by the AONB Team and the Council's landscape witness concerning the foreseeable significant harm to the AONB.
- f. The Team have been actively engaged in discussions regarding S106 payments in relation to applications affecting the Area, including the proposed extension to Swanworth Quarry (within the AONB) and Galton Manor Solar Farm (within the setting of the AONB). Both applications have the potential to result in the creation of Landscape Enhancement Funds, which would support improvements to the character and appearance of the landscape in lieu of impacts from these developments.

3.2. **Accessing resources / project development**

- a. The AONB Team has steering input to the following strategic organisations which we anticipate could be a source of funds for conserving and enhancing the AONB
 - Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (Rural Enterprise Group / Dorset Destination Management Organisation)
 - Dorset Local Nature Partnership

- Dorset Catchment Partnership
- b. The team responded to a Dorset Council questionnaire on the Rural Fund – part of the Shared Prosperity Fund, to promote various initiatives which meet the aims of that fund as well as deliver AONB Management Plan outcomes.
 - c. Bids are being progressed for a new phase of Stepping into Nature (Community Lottery, Partnerships Fund) and a collaboration with Dorset Food & Drink, Dorset Race Equality Council and Activate Performing Arts (National Lottery, Heritage Fund).
 - d. See 3.1 (f) for planning compensatory funding
- 3.3. **National Association for AONBs / Protected Landscapes** collaboration
- a. AONB Manager Tom Munro is engaged in a small national steering group for the Colchester Declaration, which continues to promote activity on nature recovery, people’s connection with nature and efforts towards net zero within AONBs.
 - b. Tom is representing all AONBs with one other AONB lead officer, alongside 2 National Park Directors and one National Park CEO on the Defra Core Working Group for the development and maintenance of Farming in Protected Landscapes.
 - c. Tom is also leading a NAAONB Agriculture & Climate Change Working Group, part of the NAAONB’s collaborative climate change action.
 - d. AONB Culture, Community & Learning Officer Sue Dampney continues to support the NAAONB through the Arts in the Landscape - Connecting People to Nature Steering Group. The group has been working with Arts Council England to agree a [Memorandum of Understanding that was formally signed](#) by Sir Nicholas Serota and Philip Hygate (Chairs of both organisations) in September and we hope will unlock further resources and support in the future. Further work with the NAAONB includes the Communications Group and participation in the steering group to explore the opportunity for AONBs to become National Landscapes, as recommended in the Glover Review.
- 3.4. **Promotion of the AONB: Events**
- a. Green Space Dark Skies: Over 500 people gathered on Maiden Castle in June to make a unique film celebrating the ancient landscape and dark skies of this iconic site. The Dorset AONB was one of just 20 protected landscapes to be chosen to take part in the national Green Space Dark Skies project led by Walk the Plank as part of the UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK. Reaching out to people who don’t regularly visit the countryside was a core value of the project and event leaders Activate Performing Arts invested time in advance connecting with groups in Dorset who are underserved by arts and environmental projects to encourage and support their participation. Dorchester rapper Isaiah Dreads and choreographer Subathra Subramaniam joined writer Zakiya McKenzie in devising a unique atmosphere for the Dorset event and the 500+ participants were armed with special low impact lamps to create the spectacle. You can see the Dorset AONB film and [more details about the Dorset event on our website](#) and you may also be interested in watching the hour-long Countryfile special which featured the finale events and captures the inclusive nature of the events (shown on 30th October 2022).



Photo credits: Green Space Dark Skies: Walk the Plank Phil Young

- b. Dawn to Dusk: We hoped that Green Space Dark Skies would spark a new interest in the landscape for people and to help them continue their journey of exploration into the landscape we created the Dawn to Dusk programme. Thirteen events were programmed in June and July to see the landscape in a new light, many capturing the magical transformation of the landscape at dawn and dusk. With over 250 attendees, many of the events had waiting lists and evaluation indicated that for over 60% people this was their first AONB event. All events were programmed for evenings and weekends to make them more accessible and a third were easily accessible by public transport. Activities explored the outstanding wildlife, history and views of the AONB through walks, art workshops, storytelling, mindfulness and stargazing. We had many positive comments, among them:

Thanks for putting on the events and for being so imaginative! This area has a rich historic culture and it's great that the AONB team helps people to value the land through live events and not just through scientific recording and information, important though that is as well.

I've lived in Dorset my whole life and walk on Maiden Castle a lot. I've read about it and studied it at uni but it's great to have the personal touch of a tour and someone to ask questions of. I'm very grateful for this opportunity - I feel more connected to my home. Thank you so much.



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

- a. The Dorset AONB Annual Review has been published in both print and digital versions to celebrate the outstanding contribution the Dorset AONB Partnership has made in the past year. Between April 2021 and March 2022, over £2 million has been invested in the natural beauty of the Dorset AONB, in turn benefitting wildlife and people across this nationally important protected landscape. With this financial support, we have brought together land

managers, communities, businesses and visitors to help conserve, enhance and celebrate the very diverse landscapes that are so special to Dorset. This work has been made possible by the generous national funders, transforming every £1 of Dorset Council support to over £41 of action on the ground. In the Review, Dr Phil Sterling, Dorset AONB Chair commented “The Dorset AONB team have played a unique role this year – leading, supporting and brokering relationships that help nature recover and people connect.” Print versions will be available at the next Partnership Board meeting and you can also read the review on the [Dorset AONB website](#).

- b. Dorset Magazine continues to support us, we have used the page dedicated to the Dorset AONB in each issue to cover elements of the Dorset AONB special qualities as well as our active projects, including dark skies, Purbeck Heaths NNR, Stepping into Nature, seasonal change and places to explore.
- c. Regular e-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. We have used social media training for the team to develop a more consistent approach to communicating the work of the Dorset AONB, opportunities to explore and our special qualities and this has led to a steady increase in followers and interactions with 9,517 Twitter followers @DorsetAONB; 2653 followers on Facebook and 1577 followers on Instagram.

PROJECTS: THOSE RELATED TO MANAGEMENT PLAN CHAPTER “THE WORKING LANDSCAPE”

3.6. [Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve](#)

Following the ‘super NNR’ declaration in 2020, the NNR Partnership of seven landowners have adopted a site management plan. The AONB Manager chairs the partnership; its function being to implement the management plan. Key work areas for the partnership include:

- a. People engagement and visitor management: much work on engagement being progressed via NT’s Dynamic Dunescapes programme with Studland as the focus. Partners also focussed on the need to reduce visitor disturbance, particularly dog walking – extending work with established body Dorset Dogs – and determining what might be an acceptable threshold of disturbance, particularly to ground nesting birds. A Purbeck Heaths Sustainable Tourism group of conservation organisations and local tourism providers meets on a regular basis.
- b. Deer and fire management: plans complete.
- c. Science and monitoring: monitoring strategy signed off; working group being formed to coordinate delivery and track process. In addition, the Purbeck Natural History Forum has been created as an umbrella and support body for volunteer engaged in environmental recording.
- d. Communications: a communications group has yet to form to coordinate communicating progress and milestones.
- e. Projects:
 - [Wilder grazing unit](#): following the completion of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund-supported work programme in 2022, the infrastructure is largely installed, enclosing a herd of c.220 cattle (mainly Red Devon with some Angus); 16-20 ponies plus 12 recently purchased Exmoor ponies; 6 donkeys and 15 pigs. A monitoring programme is under way to ensure no adverse impacts on the features for which the site is designated.
 - Beaver reintroduction: as presented to the AONB Partnership in [November 2019](#)

3.7. [Linking Chalk, River and Vale Landscape Enhancement Initiative](#)

Background: A three-year project funded by the National Grid at £200,000, that runs to Winter 2024. Conservation activity will be delivered in the Marshwood Vale and South Dorset Ridgeway in partnership with the Dorset Wildlife Trust and National Trust along with 28 farmers and land managers.

- a. The project was awarded funding in October 2021. Over the course of the next three years, the first season of winter work is about to get underway the project will:
- Plant, protect and manage 60 hedgerow oak trees
 - Lay 1,270 metres of hedgerow
 - Restore 140m of drystone wall
 - Restore 7 ha of semi-natural grassland
 - Undertake 4.7 ha of scrub clearance to ensure no loss of important grassland habitat
 - Enhance management of 10 ponds and wetlands for wildlife, particularly great crested newts
 - Create 0.75ha of wildlife corridors to increase habitat connectivity

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

- a. Background: a 3-year National Grid funded project at just under £200,000 delivering conservation activity across the South Dorset Ridgeway area in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, FWAG South West and farmers & land managers on 11 sites. Although initially due to complete by December 2021, delivery of a final few outputs will continue in 2022.
- b. The following outputs have been achieved to October 2022:
- 1,850m of hedgerow laid
 - 1,600m new hedgerow planted
 - 6 standard hedgerow trees planted
 - 3 trees conserved by pollarding and 1 fenced for protection from stock
 - 4.2ha species-rich grassland managed for scrub
 - 2.2ha grassland enhanced through flower-rich seeding and 8.4ha with diverse herbal ley and wild bird seed mix
 - 2 new ponds created
 - 200m dry stone wall restored
 - 1 stile and dog-hatch installed to improve access on Eggardon Hill

3.9. [West Dorset Rivers & Coastal Streams](#)

Background: The Dorset AONB Partnership are host to the West Dorset Rivers & Coastal Streams Catchment Based Approach. The area covers the main rivers and lakes that flow into the English Channel from Dorset, including the Char, Brit, Bride, Wey and Swan. We champion a community-led approach to protecting the water environment, based on the issues and threats identified by the Environment Agency, our own analysis and those that live and work in the area. This is set out in a recently produced Issues Appraisal. The Dorset AONB represents the WDR&CS catchment at the Dorset Catchment Partnership. The Dorset AONB are also partners in Dorset Wild Rivers (DWR), the river restoration delivery body for the Dorset Catchment Partnership. DWR is a partnership of Dorset Wildlife Trust, FWAG SW and Dorset AONB and has received 5 years of funding from Wessex Water to support delivery.

a. River Char Community Project

Background: A community-led project to improve the condition of the River Char and Monkton Wyld Stream has been ongoing since 2021. Delivered in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust and FWAG South West along with community members of in Char Valley Parish area and farmers and land managers.

- A series of events are planned for winter 2022, including two community river restoration sessions, farm walks and winter talks.
 - Farm advice is ongoing and linked to the Environment Agency funding described below.
- b. River Asker Community Project
- Background: A community-led project to improve the condition of the River Asker has been ongoing since 2018. Delivered in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust and FWAG South West along with community members of Loders, Uploders and Askerswell and farmers and land managers.
- Community engagement continues. We supported a farm walk in June to look at agri-environment enhancements. A butterfly walk was undertaken in September. A proposed bat walk was cancelled due to the weather. A talk on the birds of the catchment was held in November with 30 local attending.
 - Clearance of 12km of Himalayan balsam was undertaken for the third season in a row, infestation is much reduced.
 - Initial survey of Loders Weir has been undertaken to look at options to improve fish passage there.
- e. Environment Agency funding
- Background: We have secured funding from the Environment Agency for two projects, one focussing on farm advice for the dairy sector and the other focussing on sediment issues in the River Brit.
- Farm advice: we have secured £12,000 to deliver 10 visits from Nethergill Associates to look at sustainable farm finances, as detailed at the November 2021 Dorset AONB Board Meeting: <https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-11-23-Dorset-AONB-PBoard-Draft-Minutes.pdf>. This builds on the success of the pilot where four farms received advice.
 - Sediment: We have secured £25,000 of funding and are working in partnership with the Environment Agency, Dr Peter Stone, a geomorphologist, and Dorset Wildlife Trust on a project investigating sediment sources on the River Brit. The driver is the management burden on flood defences. Over winter 2023, we will install sediment monitoring stations at eight locations on the wider Brit system, including the Mangerton, Asker, Simene as well as the Brit. This will help identify where higher sediment loads are originating and therefore better target farm advice.

3.10. Farming in Protected Landscapes

Background: Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) is a national initiative funded by Defra through which the English AONBs and National Parks are supporting farmers, landowners and others to deliver projects which meet the programme's outcomes for People, Place, Climate and Nature. The scheme will run until March 2024.

- a. Since the FiPL scheme started on 1st July 2022, there have been 232 enquiries resulting in 107 applications. 76 projects have been approved with 28 of these completed by September 2022 (the rest are to be completed by end of March 2023 or are multi-year projects). A full list of projects supported, and three case studies are detailed on the [Dorset AONB FiPL webpage](#).
- b. Grants totalling £407k have been allocated to date for 2022/23 delivery, out of £431k available. £71k has been allocated already for 23/24 delivery out of the £430k available for the final year of the project. It is anticipated that all of 2022/23 funds will be allocated by end of November 2022, and that 10 to 20 anticipated applications will allocate a further £250k of the 2023/24 funding by the end of this financial year.
- c. Over 100 farmers have benefitted from grant awards, including members of seven farm groups or clusters in the Dorset AONB.
- d. The first six months of 2022/23 have seen considerable progress towards FiPL objectives. Highlights include;
 - Climate objective - Hemp being grown at 4 West Dorset farms, in a trial to see if this could be a crop which can thrive in a changing climate, protect our soil and provide farmers with a new product to be used in the sustainable building industry.

- Nature objective – FiPL has funded the purchase of a small-scale brush harvester which has been extensively used to harvest wildflower seeds from multiple donor sites across West Dorset. The seed is now being cleaned and sorted, and matching recipient sites lined up for autumn or spring sowing.
- People objective - a new wheelchair accessible pathway has been installed at The Shire Care at Crockermoor Care Farm, near Halstock. The path allows access from the farmyard to a quiet reflection space by the river for adults with learning disabilities and children from local SEND schools. This project has been funded in conjunction with the Nature and Wellbeing fund administered by Stepping into Nature.
- Place objective – work has commenced on stabilising the Holditch Tower through ivy removal and repointing and rebuilding in parts. This work will take this Scheduled Monument off the ‘at risk’ register, and it is hoped that it will also provide new habitat for bats and swifts.

3.11. **Triple Axe – the Axe catchment initiative**

Background: the team is working with colleagues from the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs to champion nature’s recovery in this catchment through holistic delivery of public goods & services, via environmental land management on a catchment scale.

- The East Devon Catchment Partnership is the driver of the Axe Catchment Project and consists of a broad coalition of stakeholders, decision makers and active partners in the area who have an established track-record and reputation for action. The Axe catchment has been identified as the number one priority due to its poor condition and SAC status.
- The Axe pilot forms an integral part of a new collaborative and ambitious project - Triple Axe (Farming, Nature & People)- an East Devon Catchment Partnership project.
- We are using the Catchment Based Approach to align priorities and drivers, a one year pilot phase started in autumn 2021.
- In 2022/23 the farm transformation plan approach is continuing, with the aim of creating one or more farm clusters in the catchment.
- An application for a Landscape Recovery pilot was successful with Magdalen Farm as the lead coordinator. This is the ‘transformative’ programme within Environmental Land Management (ELM). As part of the pilot, development funding will be provided by Defra to allow the group of farmers and landowners to develop a fundable 20-year environmental work programme.

3.12. **Dorset Food & Drink**

- Promotion of the sector continues online and via social media. Partnership with the Dorset Farmers’ Market (DFM) continues and is shaping up to be a good method for Dorset Food & Drink (DF&D) to offer more trading opportunities to primary producer members.
- Collaboration with Weymouth Farmers and Makers Market as delivery partners continues. Following the success of the Welcome Back Market in Blandford Form, the Town Council invited DF&D to continue with a regular monthly market, which commenced in September 2022.
- Delivery of DF&D core events for 2022-2023 include the Dorset Food & Arts Festival in Poundbury in collaboration with Dorchester Town Council and the Duchy of Cornwall, Abbotsbury Food Fair and the Athelhampton Christmas Fair, plus one new event at Abbotsbury Swannery.
- The market & events scene in Dorset is once again buoyant, with many more trading opportunities for DF&D members. There is a big push generally to ensure events promote ethical & sustainable practices and support local independent producers and makers who have sustainability at the heart of their business models. DF&D events and markets have a good track record of minimising single-use plastic, and stallholders are encouraged to ensure, where appropriate, packaging is reusable/recyclable/biodegradable.
- DF&D are still active members of the [Dorset Tourism Association](#) board where issues, plaudits and good practice are shared. A sense check of the tourism industry, innovation, sustainable tourism and smarter communications, were key drivers this year. Plus looking at how the food and culture can be used and

promoted as part of the pan Dorset tourism offer. Access and connectivity to nature, the landscape and wellbeing are also being considered in forward plans.

- f. Dorset Food and Drink members continued to have success with recognition by local awards, as well as at the Great Taste Awards in 2022, which help set the bar for what good food and drink looks and tastes like in Dorset and the wider southwest. Next steps for the DF&D Board are to future proof Dorset Food & Drink and explore options for a more focused way to link back to the original core AONB/DF&D principals, and opportunities for a more diverse and inclusive Dorset Food & Drink future.

3.13. [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. The May 2022 meeting included updates from the following projects: Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve (NNR) update on the management & infrastructure as well as visitor management strategies; Creating Space for Species (NE funded project); Landscape Recovery Pilot - Wareham Arc; South Purbeck Coast NNR development; Dynamic Dunescapes engagement; Securing Purbecks Precious Past; Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund update as well as promotion of DAONB administered funds. The May meeting discussion was centred on the Nature & Climate Discovery Fund - Peatland Restoration pilot as an introduction to the aims and objectives to explore how the partnership can work together. In addition to this, Planet Purbeck presented an opportunity to work collaboratively with partners in terms of how they can work with the partnership in the future. The final discussion was the planned visit from the Celtic Rainforest project in September to deliver a Rhododendron management workshop day disseminating their challenges and success of the project and demonstration of different management techniques.
- c. The September 2022 meeting was planned to be a demonstration day which had to be postponed until January 2023. Meeting reorganised for October where local project updates included the Wareham Arc- Landscape Recovery Pilot, NT Beaver re-introduction, Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit, and Planet Purbeck. There were no formal presentations to the partnership at this meeting other than Nature Recovery Discovery Grant Lowland Peatland Restoration.
- d. In 2022-23, the Wild Purbeck Partnership has enabled the development of a Landscape Recovery bid extending from within the AONB between East Stoke and Stoborough Heath, extending northwards to Bere Regis and Upton/Lytchett Matravers.

3.14. **Dorset Downs & Vales conservation group**

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. Natural England have agreed to facilitate the group by providing the secretariat with Dorset AONB convening and leading.

3.15. **Community Tree Project**

Background: We are developing a project to support communities in the Dorset Council area who wish to improve biodiversity and build climate resilience through planting and managing trees on land accessible to the public.

- a. We will work with parish and town councils to provide support primarily for the planning stages (rather than directly on providing and planting trees) including training to build knowledge within communities.
- b. Our first step is to gather councils' views on the kind of support they would welcome so that we can develop a project that matches need. This is now under way via an online survey.

3.16. Regenerative Agriculture incubator

Background: Regenerative Agriculture (or Regen Ag) has the potential to play a significant part in delivering the aims of the climate and ecological emergencies declared in Dorset. It can do this through the reduced use of artificial inputs, the regeneration of healthy soils and by providing space for nature at the same time as producing profitable food. Though many farmers are using regenerative agriculture principles, more could be done to increase uptake within the Dorset AONB.

- a. Liaison has been taking place with key partners on what an incubator could look like in Dorset. We would like to see training & mentoring play a key part along with peer learning.
- b. There is a risk that any offer we put together duplicates other groups, and care is needed to make sure that this does not happen.
- c. We also need to plan how we will work with farmers who are in farm clusters, and those who are not.
- d. We hope to hold a workshop over winter 2022 with key advisors and farm clusters to explore this opportunity.

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

3.17. Covid-19-related opportunities & demands

- a. The Promise to Love Dorset behavioural change campaign led by Dorset Council, Visit Dorset and Dorset AONB during summer 2021 was a finalist in the ‘campaign of the year’ Local Government Chronicle 2022 awards. Sadly, we didn’t win. The campaign was used again in summer 2022 by the partners, albeit without the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) funding to market and promote it in the same way as 2021. The messages seem to be getting through, with positive changes in visitor behaviour seen, as shown below:

HEATH FIRES (1 May – 31 Aug)

2019 – 85

2020 – 110

2021 – 57

2022 – 58 (particularly positive, considering the prolonged heat wave throughout July and August)

PARKING TICKETS ISSUED (1 May – 31 Aug)

2019 – 15,609

2020 – 14,080

2021 - 11,454

2022 – 8,471

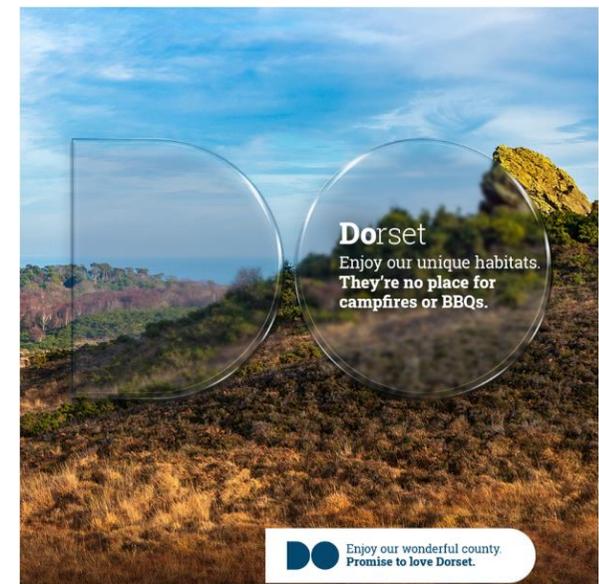
ASB reports (nuisance only, 1 April – 31 Aug)

2019 – 8,106

2020 – 10,708

2021 – 7,311

2022 - 5,672



3.18. Stepping into Nature

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

a. **Delivery**

- Online 'Picnic in the Parks' page views remain consistent (views same as in previous 6 months). Discover the park: www.picnicintheparks.org
- Face to Face activity delivery
 - Walk for Wellbeing - Shaftesbury
 - Dorset History Walks – various locations
 - Wild Writing courses linked with libraries
- Seasons of Stories Spring & Summer books have been created/distributed to assist connection to nature through poetry, story, imagery and conversation. The Winter book is in planning and due to be released late 2022, in addition to audio versions early 2023.
- The Dorset History Walks guides continue to be promoted and shared and 6 more locations are being developed (with designer now, hope to launch early 2023)
- The Thriving Communities project finished in June 2022, although original targets were challenging because of ongoing Covid restrictions, a key success of the project was the strength of partnership working. For more information see [view 'Stepping into Nature's' resource page](#) on the AONB website.
- The Stepping into Nature Conference was held at Kingston Maurward on 1st November 2022, showcasing Stepping into Nature resources for nature-based activity for wellbeing. Over 100 people from the to the health and environment sectors attended and you can find presentations from the Conference on the [Dorset AONB website](#).

b. **Health and Nature Dorset**

- Health and Nature Dorset (HAND) aims to strengthen joint working on nature-based wellbeing across Dorset (BCP and Dorset council areas) to increase the access to, use of and connection with the natural environment to support and enhance physical and mental wellbeing across Dorset. Further information on the HAND collaboration can be found on the [Dorset Local Nature Partnership \(LNP\) website](#)
- Delivering the successful pilot project: £30,000 from 'Our Dorset' to support staff wellbeing across the Integrated Care System using nature-based activity. A programme of events is in place for staff to book onto. Feedback from those attending the activities has been great but take up could be improved. Setting up more tailored events for NHS staff is being trialled.
- Secured an additional £10, 000 from Natural England Seed Fund for action research looking into the barriers to engagement for audiences that find accessing nature difficult, to be delivered by March 2023.

c. **Community Pot** for catalysing change

- Our community pot was combined into a larger partnership fund. See section 'E' below.

d. **Your Season of Stories**

- A nature and creative community project led by Stepping into Nature and supported by £45,000 public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.
- The project co-developed, along with four Dorset based artists and community groups, a beautifully written, illustrated and filmed mix of creative writing and art activities. The resources are now available as downloadable activity booklets, art, templates and short films or as a limited-edition physical box of resources. They are great for adults of any age and ability and are adaptable to being done indoors or out, in groups or individually, and

with minimal materials needed. 1000 boxes have been distributed and 21 workshops to promote the resources further have been held. All are available online to download [via the Stepping into Nature 'Picnic in the Parks' webpages](#).

e. Collaborative work

- The [Nature, Art and Wellbeing Community Fund](#) from Stepping into Nature, National Academy for Social Prescribing Fund via the Thriving Communities Project and Contain Outbreak Management Fund via Dorset Council Better Days, Coast and Greenspace Teams has:
 - Awarded funding to 29 projects totalling £48,715 with around £88,000 in-kind/match predicated.
 - A third round is currently running to ensure all final funds are allocated before end March 2023.

Projects supported include:

- Increased activity in art, nature and movement for example: Learning about plants through art and Nordic walking for cancer survivors.
- Diversity and Inclusion in greenspaces for example: Back to Nature well-being group ran by the Bus Shelter Dorset and Sensory equipment for Community Woodland with Weymouth Town Council.
- Deliver/test solutions to barriers for example: supporting nature-based activity to those living with sight impairment with Dorset Blind Association or profound deafness with CoCreate Dorset CIC.
- Supporting wellbeing research with Creating a Wellbeing Assessment Tool for 'Big Butterfly Count'.

f. Looking Forward

- The next few months running up to March 2023 will be busy, allocating and delivering the last 6 months of the Stepping into Nature project funds. Much of this will be used to produce self-guided resources and group activities.
- We are exploring options for post March 2023 for the project. This will include writing a bid for a health and nature focused project helping to support the delivery of the HAND collaboration aims and priorities.

3.19. Visitor Management steering input

Sally King is a board member of the Dorset Tourism Association representing Dorset AONB and the Jurassic Coast Trust and the Board continues to meet regularly. Changes may be afoot following the national DMO review which talks about DMO tiers but the government response to the review is still awaited.

Sally continues to attend Litter Free Dorset Forum meetings and contributes and advises on visitor management and other issues.

Stakeholders from the Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit sustainable tourism network met early autumn to discuss progress on delivering the sustainable tourism plan since its launch in March, highlighting active travel and diversity & equity. A new video has been created which explains what the NNR is and how special it is, available for all to share. [Purbeck Heaths NNR: A Landscape for Wildlife and People - YouTube](#)

3.20. Jurassic Coast Visitor Management

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.

a. West Bay: The latest interpretation improvements at West Bay are complete (£20k funding from Coastal Communities Fund)



b. Branscombe: Interpretation improvements completed.



- c. A capital bid to Dorset Council for replacing safety signage along the Dorset coast has been submitted. With match funding, the total bid would be just short of £90k. Much of the safety signage is old, degraded and difficult to read, and replacement should be a priority. We will hear in January 2023 whether the bid has been successful.
- d. Sidmouth: Work is underway to increase the profile of the Jurassic Coast WHS in the town. Repairs to degraded interpretation, as well as a new panel in a key position on the Esplanade are funded by Devon County Council and East Devon District Council and should be completed early 2023.
- e. East Devon section of Jurassic Coast: through an audit undertaken in August 2022, £50k worth of interpretation improvements identified but funding yet to be sourced.

3.21. Sustainable travel

- a. Work continues with local walker and writer Robert Westwood to co-create a book of Dorset AONB walks. Focused on less well-known areas, especially inland (where the infrastructure allows), the book will also include walks from bus stops and accessible walks. The book will be branded in the Dorset AONB house style and aims to be published by Easter 2023.

3.22. The Inside Out Dorset Festival

- a. Organised by Activate Performing Arts, planning is under way for the festival in September 2023.
- b. The Dorset AONB Partnership is a festival partner in order to support 10 days of festival activity at a rural site in order to celebrate, inform and question our human relationship with land, food and nature.

3.23. Engaging Young People

- a. **Assessing the Accessibility of the Dorset AONB for young people:** In December 2021, we were successful in obtaining funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme for Stage 1 of a project (feasibility study), to assess young people's views of how accessible the AONB is currently, identify barriers as well as incentives to generate a blueprint of realistic actions. Youth specialist contractor Participation People were funded to recruit, train and support a group of young people to conduct the survey. Analysis of the data collected has generated a report outlining actions that are aligned to the objectives of the AONB. Actions will be a road map for the AONB, aiming to work with landowners to develop activities and projects that can lead to behaviour change among our young people. This will be Stage 2 of this project which will require additional funding and the potential for a subsequent application. [Link to Participation Peoples 'Young Researchers' report](#)

Next Steps:

- Nov 2022 – organise a meeting with Stakeholders to discuss and explore potential medium to long term opportunities to work together
 - Dec 2022 – Stage 2 application to FiPL to develop a short-term project to recruit 3-4 cohorts of young people (age 11-18) across the AONB, acting as a pilot for co-producing events / countryside skills training for young people.
 - Subject to application decision: Feb/March 2023 - the initial phase of project to commence & April – August 2022, event/s development and delivery.
- b. During the Summer Term 2022, the Dorset AONB team delivered pilot Year 1 activities for the [Urban Nature Project on behalf of Dorset Museum](#). The Urban Nature Project is a national project led by the [Natural History Museum](#), to inspire and equip young people to engage with the urban wildlife around them and understand their role as scientists in its future. Aimed mainly at KS3 pupils (age 11-14 year olds), we successfully connected with science departments at secondary schools in the Bridport and Beaminster and delivered on our target of engaging 251 students in outdoor workshops in the summer term. In doing so, we were able to develop relevant curriculum linked activities for 3 schools to explore urban nature within walking distance of their school and focussed on Trees and River Wildlife, all of which can be repeated by schools in future years.

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

3.1. Low Carbon Dorset

- a. Low Carbon Dorset is a five-year programme of activities 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 hosted by Dorset Council (DC) and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
 - More details can be found on the programme website: <https://www.lowcarbondonset.org.uk/>

b. Summary of total activity to end of September 2022

- Received 737 applications for support
- Awarded 197 grants totalling £6.1M
- Supported 174 Dorset based SMEs through either 12 hours technical support or a grant of a minimum of £1k

c. Summary of activity between 1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022

- Received 90 applications for support
- Awarded 42 grants totalling £880k
- A further 8 Dorset SMEs reported to ERDF receiving 12 hours technical support or a grant of minimum £1K

d. So far, support and 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)

- £17.3M of investment in low-carbon projects in Dorset
- An annual carbon reduction of 10,180 tonnes of CO₂ in Dorset
- The installation of 12.86 MW of renewable energy capacity in Dorset
- Improvements in the energy efficiency of 70 houses in Dorset
- The development of 7 new low carbon products in Dorset
- The reduction of energy used in public-sector buildings by 1,203,468 kwh/yr

e. Programme updates:

- Four new [case studies](#) added to the website.
- Created a [Summary guide to the 'Energy Bill Relief Scheme'](#), the UK Government's support package for non-domestic energy customers.
- Low Carbon Dorset projects are now plotted on a layer of the Dorset Explorer map, alongside other Dorset Council projects responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency. This information will also be made publicly available.
- Low Carbon Dorset have had guest speaker slots at: Dorset Growth Hub's Coffee & Catch up, Dorset Business Growth Breakfast, Working Live! magazine show, and The Public Sector Estates Conference.
- Visits to some projects supported by Low Carbon Dorset were arranged to introduce Dorset Council's new Corporate Director for Climate and Ecological Sustainability to the programme and its beneficiaries. Two beneficiary projects also presented their projects and answered questions at the August Low Carbon Dorset Board meeting.
- Ongoing social media campaigns: #DorsetFootprint #LowCarbonHeroes #LowCarbonLearningList (with a pause in posts to observe the national mourning period following the death of Her Majesty The Queen).
- Selected media coverage highlights:

[3.1.e..0. 'Substantial' energy savings at Dorchester's Corn Exchange | Dorset Echo – 24/05/22](#)

[3.1.e..1. Dorset's largest country park goes green - Dorset Council news - 15/06/22](#)

[3.1.e..2. Focus feature: Decarbonising college estates | FE week - 05/08/22](#)

[3.1.e..3. Farm shop's lightbulb moment after £9k electric bill | The West Dorset Magazine – 23/09/22](#)

3.2. **Wild Purbeck: [Wytch Farm Landscape & Access Fund](#)**

- a. The Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Panel makes recommendations on funding for projects which strengthen landscape character, enhance biodiversity and encourage no-car access in the landscape character areas affected by the operation of the Wytch Farm oilfield. Funds are held by Dorset Council and were secured through a section 106 agreement to ameliorate the effect of the oilfield's continued presence in the AONB. The fund totals £1.7M.
- b. Panel meetings have been held in July 2022 and October 2022.
- c. To date 27 projects have been formally offered grant funds (not including 1 'In Principle'). Twenty of these are now complete.
- d. Grants awarded 2022-23 were for a total of 5 projects (relevant pillar x3 Biodiversity & x2 access)
 - **Purbecks Invasive Plants - audit & control Phase3:** (£236,596.10 offered) 3-year project to manage and control the non-native plant species.
 - **NT - Beryl Bikes to Studland:** (£30,000 offered) for the Pilot Phase of the project (Sept 2022-August 2024) to install Beryl bike bays, 10 Beryl road-worthy push bikes, Bike maintenance, Digital set-up, Communications and project management.
 - **Lulworth Lake:** (£8102 offered) 1-2 year project removing Rhododendron from the woodland area surrounding the lake.
 - **FWAG Rempstone Hedge Phase 3:** (£17,990.72 offered) 1.5-year project to continue the whole-farm restoration of hedgerows and standard trees.
 - **Sharford bridge flood improvement:** (£15,530 offered) 1 year project to install a causeway to raise the bridleway above the height of the average tide, 30m on east side, 5m west and 5m on western side of field. Project will improve the bridleway (SE11.4) which is part of the National Cycle Network Route 2, enabling access throughout the year across this very wet area.
- e. Additional support for the 'in principle' projects with Dorset Council to improve and create cycle routes from Nordon Park to Corfe continues with a revised application due to be submitted late 2022.
- f. **Purbeck's Precious Past** is being managed by the Wild Purbeck Officer and delivered with a part time project officer on secondment from Dorset Coast Forum. The project will be focused on 4 target areas throughout the Wytch Farm target Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Key aims of the project are to engage the local community in their heritage by developing an accessible survey, encouraging citizen science and work to secure the future of veteran trees and the wildlife they support through practical work. Through collaboration we will work across the landscape with partners, local communities, and schools. We will gather seed from historic local tree stock, grow on the next generation of trees and aim to use these saplings to plant hedges and strategically placed new woodland in the target areas.
- g. The following outputs have been achieved to October 2022:
 - Delivered 16 events.
 - Since April 2022, total of 201 volunteer hours.
 - Surveyed over 100 trees in 3 sites: Rempstone Wood, Arne and Lulworth Ranges.
 - Established 2 tree nurseries, with around 80 cuttings and over 500 seedlings of over 13 species and more still stratifying (including 30 Wych Elm seedlings to be transplanted this Autumn).

3.3. [Fingerpost Restoration](#)

- a. Work to restore Dorset's traditional fingerposts continues, led by Roger Bond (Normtec) and his band of 12 volunteers, including 6 individuals who have been regular contributors, Blandford & Dorchester Men's Sheds & students from Kingston Maurwood College.
- b. Between 1st April 2022 to 1st October 2022, 21 Fingerposts have been fully restored across the county, 6 are in progress and 5 in the pipeline. Recent restorations include Kington Magna, Briantspuddle & Affpuddle, Evershot, Bradpole and Church Knowle.
- c. 6 Fingerposts are currently in the process of being restored, these include 2 in Corscombe & Halstock, Lytchett Matravers and Compton Valance.
- d. Dorset AONB continues to contribute towards the cost of Roger's time and some materials. Further information on the project can be found [on the Dorset AONB website](#).



PROJECTS: THOSE RELATED TO MANAGMENT PLAN CHAPTER "WAYS OF WORKING"

3.4. [Sustainable Development Fund](#)

- a. 10 applications with a total request of just over £16,000 were considered by the SDF Panel in June 2022. The panel awarded 9 projects a total of £11,392 grant funding to support the following projects:
 - **Planet Purbeck Festival** (Sept 2022): Costs towards the hire of The Mowlem Centre in Swanage as a festival hub, enabling them to reach a wider audience and connect with the community, in particular young people around the climate & ecological emergency. Further information [here](#)
 - **Dorset Dry Stone Wall Association**: Extra skills and certification for dry stone wallers through subsidised members exam fees and help towards the purchase of replacement / additional tools. Further information [here](#)

ITEM 5: BUSINESS PLAN 2023-2024 BUDGET HEADLINES

ITEM FOR	Decision	REPORT BY	AONB Manager
SUMMARY	In April 2022 the Dorset AONB Partnership was given a core funding settlement for 2022-2023 with an increase of 14.6% on the previous year at £283,704.71. The funding letter states that this is also the indicative amount for years 23/24 and 24/25. This Business Plan is based on this figure, with Dorset Council expected to maintain its core contribution (£56,300). This item outlines the proposed allocation of these funds and those from the AONB’s contributing Local Authority. Recommended priorities for spend if core grants increase are outlined.		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	This item covers all AONB finance for 2022-2023.		
RECOMMENDATION	The Board approves the proposed budget and funding priorities for next financial year		

5.1. Defra & Dorset Council core contributions

- a. The increase in core funds from Defra in April 2022 was welcomed. The offer letter states “*We have secured some supplementary core grant funding for AONBs over the next three years, in addition to the baseline 2021/22 budget. This is confirmed as an additional £36,266.71 for your AONB in 2022/23 and is indicative for years 2023/24 and 2024/25.*” In the absence of any indication for the year 2023-2024, this budget is prepared on the assumption that the uplift is to be maintained to keep the Defra contribution at £283,704.71
- b. The letter also goes on to state “*Please note that we expect the new grant agreement to include the standard condition with regards to additional funding for your core expenditure: The grant is conditional on the Grant Recipient satisfying Defra that it has secured or has adequate arrangements in place enabling it to secure, additional funding equivalent to at least 25% of its core expenditure, in cash terms, directly or indirectly from Third Party sources, such that the Grant does not contribute over 75% of the Grant Recipient’s total Core Expenditure in any one Financial Year. Remaining Grant funding can contribute to Grant Recipient’s project and programme as set out in its Management Plan.* Therefore, please let your host local authority know that we will be expecting the proposed uplift in AONB budgets to be matched proportionately in line with this condition.
- c. While the case has been made for a proportionate uplift in core funds from Dorset Council, it is unlikely that this can be achieved with the authority’s considerable budget pressures. The team has been able to ensure at least 25% non-Defra funding by transferring core staff costs to projects where appropriate and seeking other forms of core income.

5.2. Staffing costs

There has been considerable uplift in projected staff costs (over £40,000) in comparison to the previous year’s budget due to the public sector pay award and an increase in pension contribution percentage.

5.3. 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.

5.4. INCOME FORECAST

The Dorset AONB’s Local Authority contributions is expected to be maintained. 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	£ 283,705
	Dorset Council	£ 56,300
	Other income / reserve	£ 22,339
	TOTAL non-Defra income	£ 78,639
	TOTAL	£ 362,344

5.5. 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 require the income target of £12,600 as outlined above.

- b. The process has, to date, been carried out according to guidance published by the Countryside Agency in 2001. The Landscapes (Glover) Review recommended refreshing this guidance to reflect the review's ambition for protected landscapes. The review also made recommendations on performance monitoring for AONBs and National Parks.
- c. Consequently, Defra, Natural England, NAAONB and National Parks England are working together on two items which will have significant bearing on future Management Plans. These are:
- Outcome-based targets: a targets and monitoring framework is being established for all Protected Landscapes; this is due to be published in January 2023.
 - Management Plan guidance: a comprehensive re-write of guidance for the production of Protected Landscape Management Plans is due to be published in Spring 2023.
- d. Lord Benyon wrote to AONB lead officers in August 2022: key excerpts
- "We have therefore decided to grant you an option to delay publication of your next Management Plan. In practice, this option to delay will only apply to Partnerships that are required by law to review their next Management Plan in 2023 or 2024 and will therefore apply to Partnerships who currently find themselves in the middle or nearing the end of their five-year Management Plan cycle."
 - "In order to comply with the law without compromising the integrity of future Management Plans, Defra judges that Partnerships could simply produce a light-touch review in which they commit to produce a new Management Plan after the new guidance is published."
 - "Defra has considered what a light-touch review might look like and advises the following: *Partnerships would agree and publish one page of text setting out their intentions for the next Management Plan. This could include a brief vision statement, a summary of how the Management Plan will be structured, and a summary of the Partnerships' objectives over the next five-year review period (carrying forward actions and/or adding new ones for the year affected by the delay).* Producing a light-touch review of this nature would allow Partnerships to carry over their existing Plan by demonstrating they have considered the next Plan, in compliance with the law. Partnerships would not need to consult extensively to produce this light-touch review, as we expect it would be pitched as a continuation/extension of the current Plan."
 - "We remain committed, however, to ensuring substantive Management Plan reviews are conducted. We therefore ask all Protected Landscapes electing to delay their next Management Plan to complete a review of that Plan no later than 31 December 2025."
- e. The Dorset AONB Steering Group recommends delaying the full review of the management plan in order to ensure that the new plan follows new guidance. If the AONB Board agrees with this recommendation, the AONB Team will conduct a very light touch review as described in italics above for production by March 2023, thereafter the team will conduct a full review for publication of a new plan under new guidance by December 2025.

ITEM 7: NATIONAL LANDSCAPES - REBRANDING

ITEM FOR	Information	REPORT BY	AONB Culture, Community & Learning Officer
SUMMARY	Proposed rebrand of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the National Association for AONBs		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	No short-term cost: immediate visual identity costs will be covered by Defra via NAAONB. There will be a cost to evolving display materials, website etc, but this can be done organically		
RECOMMENDATION	While this is for information at this time, a local decision will need to be made about joining the national-led process. The Board can agree to either <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delegate the decision to the Dorset AONB Steering Group, or 2. Defer decision until the May meeting 		

7.1. The Glover Review of English Designated landscape (2019) recommended change of purposes, powers and resources as a well as a change of name from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to National landscapes. National Association for AONBs has been allocated Defra funding to explore how the renaming of AONBs can be enacted across the AONB family.

7.2. Underlying principles

Proposal 24 of the Glover Review called for AONBs to be “strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources and renamed as National Landscapes.” The rationale behind this proposal was it the review group felt it wrong that AONBs only have a single purpose, which refers to ‘natural beauty’, and, unlike National Parks, have no stated role in public enjoyment or to support communities and sustainable economic activity. The proposals calls for a single set of expanded national landscape purposes for AONBs and National Parks.

The AONB brand has a dual role:

- 1) A description of the ‘organising function’, the staff and governance structure that acts as a ‘force for good’ within the landscape - brokering collaborations, delivering programmes etc.
- 2) A description of the place itself, the unique landscapes made up of a complex web of environmental, economic, and cultural factors.

A key theme in the Glover Review was that “our national landscapes are national and that means they should be places for everyone.” Widening the range of people who are aware of and benefit from protected landscapes is a key step to achieving this. In 2021, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) commissioned an independent consultant to explore perceptions of the AONB brand within the AONB family, current stakeholders and underrepresented groups. The research found that the current vision and purpose isn’t that obvious, specifically to those speaking for underrepresented audiences as well as a wider group of stakeholders.

The research found that name Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is considered as one of the barriers to reaching a wider audience. The name is lengthy and cumbersome and is commonly known by its acronym AONB which is often misspelt and/or mispronounced. Moreover, AONBs have little consistency visually and, whilst some are well established, there is little to link AONBs to each other, or to a national group and common cause.

