



Dorset AONB Partnership  
Hosted by Dorset Council  
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## Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 10.00am, Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023

### Dorchester Cricket Club Pavilion, Sawmills Lane (off Weymouth Avenue) DT1 2RZ

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

## AGENDA

Chairman's welcome, introduction & apologies

1. Minutes of the last meeting
2. Partners' 2-minute updates
3. AONB equity, diversity and inclusion – statement of intent (for decision)
4. Delivering the AONB Management Plan - team activity report for 2022-2023 (for information)
5. 2022-2023 AONB Partnership accounts (for information)
6. NAAONB-led National Landscapes re-brand (for information)
7. Any other business
  - a. AONB Management Plan review timeline
  - b. AONB Annual Forums

APPENDIX: further team activity detail

### Proposed dates of next meetings:

Dates of next meetings

	Winter (agreed)	Spring (tbc)
<i>AONB Steering Group</i>	<i>17<sup>th</sup> October 2023</i>	<i>18<sup>th</sup> April 2024</i>
<b>AONB Partnership Board</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> November 2023</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024</b>

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: Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 10.00am, Tues. 22nd November 2021 (County Hall, Dorchester)

### Board attendance:

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 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), 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 Bleese 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 - 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. 20<sup>th</sup> 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. CllrRTarr: 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. CllrCTurner: 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. CllrRTarr: 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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. P Sterling: 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. Cllr RTarr: 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. Cllr RTarr: 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. Cllr RTarr: 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. P Sterling: 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.



### **3.3. FORMALISE A FRAMEWORK FOR EDI ACTION AND REVIEW**

**Ensuring that Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is central to strategic work of the Dorset AONB Partnership, that impact of our action is evaluated, and achievements reported and shared.**

a. Where we are now:

- An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken in 2019 as part of the process of creating the Dorset AONB Management Plan 2019-24. The EqIA identified actions to improve access to the landscape and our ways of working. Many of the actions identified have been enacted but there is no established mechanism, or specific member of staff, to monitor and report on these actions.

b. What we will do next:

- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): With the support of the Dorset Council Equality Reference Group, we will review, reflect and report on progress at the end of the Management Plan period (2024) and develop a new EqIA, for the new Management Plan (2025-30). A new EDI Steering Group will be created to oversee this piece of work, to include AONB staff and partners.
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan: To ensure that the EDI actions from the EqIA are not lost, they will be captured and published in an EDI Action Plan, to be reviewed twice a year by the EDI Steering Group and reported on annually at the Dorset AONB Partnership Board. This will ensure that EDI achievements across the AONB Partnership, not just the work of the AONB Team, are celebrated and shared and that gaps and opportunities are assessed and addressed.

### **3.4. INVITE DIVERSE VOICES INTO DECISION MAKING**

**Recognising the value of diverse voices in our decision making and ensuring relevance and integrity in consultation processes.**

a. Where we are now:

- Produced every 5 years, the Dorset AONB Management Plan sets out the vision for the designated area and the priorities for its management over a 5-year period. The Management Plan process is overseen by a Steering Group which has in the past invited specialist input into priority areas of focus.
- We recognise the importance and value of including a diversity of stakeholders into the decision making of our projects, at the planning as well as delivery stages. Some of our projects have Steering Groups with stakeholder representation but not all.
- The AONB Partnership brings together representatives of 17 different organisations with interests across local government, central government, landowning and farming bodies, conservation organisations, tourism, economy and the community. Dorset Race Equality Council was elected to have a representative on the Board to act as a champion for EDI. A lack of diversity of the environmental sector was highlighted in the Landscapes Review and a governance review proposed. We are expecting this to be undertaken nationally with leadership from Defra.

b. What we will do next:

- Steering the development and consultation of the next Management Plan: The Dorset AONB Partnership Board will invite and support a wider range of people to be involved in steering the development and consultation of the next Management Plan, creating a transparent process for engagement from the outset.
- Stakeholder involvement in project development and delivery: For all major projects where additional funding is being sought, we will invite appropriate stakeholders to join at the outset, building in additional resources to support involvement if required.
- Strategic review of AONB governance: The Dorset AONB will support the National Association for AONBs in actions to establish a system to review AONB governance and/or help diversify the environmental sector.

### 3.5. CO-CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH LANDSCAPES AND NATURE

**Investing in relationships with wider communities, creating new opportunities together to ensure relevance and bring in fresh ideas to our work.**

#### a. Where we are now:

- Older people and those living with long term health conditions: The Stepping into Nature project has successfully improved connection to nature for older people and people living with dementia for the past 6 years. Now in its third phase of development, it will continue to focus on older people and those with long term health conditions, rolling out the Nature Buddies scheme across the AONB, working with stakeholder organisations to understand and overcome barriers.
- Ethnic minority communities: The Breaking Bread (working title) project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and with Dorset Race Equality Council, Dorset Food & Drink and Activate as partners. Over 18 months, it will invest in developing relationships between ethnic minority communities and the landscape. The AONB Partnership is treating it as a pilot to inform a more sustainable programme of action to promote equality of access, and the relationships we hope to build will help us co-create that programme of action.
- Young people: With support from the Farming in Protected Landscape programme, the AONB team commissioned a survey by young people to understand perceptions of the countryside of 11–24-year-olds and barriers to access. Building on this survey, a series of co-created events with young people are to be developed in 2023-24. A longer-term vision for young people in the countryside is also be developed with environmental and youth partners across Dorset. A pilot project to develop tree-related activities Reception and KS1 pupils in West Dorset schools is underway, with support from Public Health Dorset.
- Accessible paths: In 2022-23, the Dorset AONB team project managed over £77,000 of Defra allocated funding for access improvements, including for people with reduced mobility and/or those who need mobility aids such as wheelchairs or scooters. Paths in and around Bridport have been resurfaced and further work to improve access for all at Black Down has also been undertaken by Dorset Council's Ranger Service.
- Rural isolation and low income: Working across the network of AONBs, the National Association for AONBs is submitting a bid to Arts Council England for the Sticks and Stones project. If successful, Dorset AONB will be one of 6 'hub' locations to create new opportunities for rural isolated and low-income communities on the northern edge of the AONB to creatively connect with the outstanding landscape on their doorstep. If not successful, we will pick up and build contacts made in Weymouth, on the southern edge of the AONB.

#### b. What we will do next:

- Ethnic minority communities: Breaking Bread will be treated as a pilot to inform a more sustainable programme of action to promote equality of access, and the relationships we hope to build will help us co-create that programme of action.
- Young people: The survey has provided a catalyst for organisations to create a longer-term vision for young people in the countryside is also be developed with environmental and youth partners across Dorset.
- Rural isolation and low income: If the Sticks and Stones project bid is not successful, we will pick up and build contacts made in Weymouth, on the southern edge of the AONB.
- Accessible paths: Liaise with stakeholders to identify priorities for phase 2 path improvements funded by Defra.
- Targeting community grants: The Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund is a small pot of funding available to people who want to conserve, enhance or celebrate the landscape heritage in their local

area. We will review beneficiaries of the Fund over the past 7 years and amend the criteria / target specific communities with future Funds to widen reach.

### **3.6. COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**

**Ensuring that communication of opportunities for exploring, understanding and getting involved are inclusive.**

a. Where we are now:

- The Dorset AONB Partnership is sensitive to the importance of being inclusive in communications and project communications tailored to be appropriate to target audience. However, there has been no formal review of the accessibility of our communication channels.

b. What we will do next:

- New brand guidelines: The proposed National Landscapes rebrand has carefully considered accessibility in design, use of imagery and language. Adopting the rebrand and using the guidelines aims to improve accessibility of the Dorset AONB communications.
- AONB website: We will commission an audit and public survey of the Dorset AONB website to understand how accessible the content and format is and what improvements can be made to improve it.
- Targeted communication: Through the targeted projects outlined in (3) we will increase our understanding of the best communication channels to reach specific audiences and integrate these into mainstream communications.

### **3.7. DEVELOP INFORMED AND INCLUSIVE WAYS OF WORKING**

**Listening, learning, reflecting, challenging and sharing will help us on our journey to becoming a more inclusive organisation.**

a. Where we are now:

- The Dorset AONB Team received EDI training from Dorset Race Equality Council (Dorset REC) in 2022 and many of the team also attended the NAAONB People and Places Conference 2022 which centred around widening engagement. All staff engage in mandatory EDI training devised by our host, Dorset Council. Members of the team also have had varying levels of experience and training in the specific target audiences they are working with.
- Delivery partners in the Breaking Bread project will be required to undergo online EDI training from Dorset REC before hosting activities.
- Census data has been used to inform recent project planning but approach could be rolled out to inform other projects.
- Natural England has recently convened a Wessex AONBs EDI group to share and support good practice and Dorset AONB benefitted from this support.

b. What we will do next:

- Training & support: Identify gaps in EDI confidence and understanding within AONB team. Meet training needs through formal training, sharing good practice and guided discussion at team meetings. Extend training and support to project partners where needed to ensure inclusive ways of working.
- Knowing our audience: Ensure that up to date data is used to inform project development by providing staff training to collate community census profiles and interpret data.
- Sharing and inspiring good practice: Work with Natural England advisors; other AONBs and NAAONB to build supportive 'communities of practice' to share EDI experiences, develop confidence and inspire action.

## ITEM 4: Delivering the AONB Management Plan - team activity report for 2022-2023

ITEM FOR	Information	REPORT BY	AONB team
<b>SUMMARY</b>	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.		
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	Delivery based on agreed budget and business plan.		
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	The Board approves and notes the progress made towards delivering the AONB Management Plan 2019-2024		

This new presentation format is hopefully more digestible. Further detail is appended to the rear of these papers

### 4.1. NATURE

The AONB's wealth of wildlife is one of the outstanding qualities that underpin its designation, including the extent and diversity of semi-natural habitats and the wide array of species. The UK's most diverse grid square (vascular plants and mammals) is in the Dorset AONB to the south and west of Wareham.

The AONB team leads strategic nature-focussed partnerships in Wild Purbeck and the Dorset Downs and Vales Conservation Forum, and contributes to many others (SNCI Forum, Jurassic Coast Nature Recovery Network, Dorset Local Nature Recovery group, Dorset Local Nature Partnership, etc).

The AONB Partnership also directs significant funding towards nature outcomes through Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL), the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund and other ad hoc funding streams.



#### a. PURBECK HEATHS NNR / WILD GRAZING UNIT

The Purbeck Heaths 'super' National Nature Reserve (NNR) was declared in February 2020, enabled by the depth of conservation partnership working consolidated by the Wild Purbeck Partnership. Over 3,000 hectares, land ownership lies with 7 separate bodies, each coming together in a steering group chaired by the AONB team.

Within the NNR, there is a single grazing unit of over 1,700ha with no internal fences, in which roam domestic cattle, ponies, donkeys and pigs alongside wild deer. The AONB Team led significant infrastructure investment through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in 2021-2022 with match from the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund, and continues to lead the working group, tackling issues, monitoring impacts and communicating the benefits of reinstating natural processes in this way. Further infrastructure enhancements are to be made in 2022-2023 using the remaining Wytch Farm funds.

#### Highlights:

- A herd of 30 pigs were released onto the heath, managed by James Warren of the Salt Pig. A close monitoring programme is under way to ensure they benefit rather than harm the heathlands
- 12 Exmoor ponies are joining the grazing guild – these are the UK's wildest native equine
- A sustainable tourism forum of over 20 local businesses meets regularly, making the most of this significant attraction

*The enhanced wildness you can experience on the heaths is significant – the white tailed eagles which are becoming more regular inhabitants seem to agree!*

[www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/purbeck-heaths-grazing-unit/](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/purbeck-heaths-grazing-unit/)

#### b. WEST DORSET RIVERS & COASTAL STREAMS

The Dorset AONB is the catchment host for the [West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams](#) operational catchment, and supports action to improve the condition of our rivers and streams, guided by issues appraisals that are updated every five years.

Two communities have been particularly motivated to improve their rivers: those along the River Asker, and those along the River Char. Through partnership working with [Dorset Wild Rivers](#), we have supported landowner advice, improved land management, habitat management, river restoration, and invasive species control. Significant funding been received from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and Environment Agency.

Recently, interest in the health of our rivers has increased amongst communities, and we are now working with organisations representing the rivers Brit, Simene, Winniford, and Lim as well as Asker and Char. This includes support for the newly formed and community-led 'Clean Rivers of West Dorset' group, which has the support and involvement of [Chris Loder MP](#).

#### Highlights:

- Four volunteer tasks and six walks and talks to approximately 200 people in the Char and Asker catchments.
- Undertaken an investigation on the wider Brit catchment looking at sediment sources and advising on management that reduce inundation of the flood defences in Bridport. 24 farmers engaged. (EA funded).
- Cleared 12km of Himalayan balsam from the Asker catchment, the fourth year of treatment (EA funded).
- 400m of river management for wildlife at four locations.
- Supported the establishment of Clean Rivers of West Dorset, which has met with Chris Loder MP and Wessex Water.
- Engaging with the Making Rivers Better rivers network in East Devon.

*Interest in the state of our rivers has grown hugely since the Covid pandemic. This year, we hope to better support the burgeoning number of community groups to improve the state of their rivers.*

[www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/rivers/](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/rivers/)

### c. WYTCH FARM LANDSCAPE AND ACCESS ENHANCEMENT FUND

The Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund was established through a section 106 agreement associated with a planning application to extend the working life of the Wytch Farm oilfield by a further 20 years, the fund opened in January 2018. Perenco, the oilfield operator, provided a sum of £1.7 million for landscape, biodiversity, and sustainable transport projects to enhance the landscape. Since then, there have been 30 successful project applications, 20 of these have been completed with 10 currently in progress. To date, a total of **£1,396,807.67** grant funding has been offered, towards total project costs of **£2,693,733.60**.

#### Highlights:

- Beryl Bikes launched in March 2023 [Beryl Launches in Studland with 4 New Bays | Beryl](#) and this press release [Beryl offer exciting new bike scheme extension into Studland | Beryl](#)
- Purbecks Precious Past – Veteran Tree project delivered a total of **31 events** (x3 training, x1 guided walk, x4 seed gathering x3 mix of survey and seeds, x14 Veteran tree surveys, x6 tree nursery days) involving at least **x50 individuals** (no repeats) and **437 volunteer hours!**
- Purbecks Invasive Plants project contractors have managed an approximate total of **8.4ha of Rhododendron** from x4 sites -Salterns Copse 2.6Ha, Doreys (Holme estate) 2Ha, Newton Copse (Rempstone) 2.5Ha, East Holme (ARC) 1.3Ha.
- SWFWAG led Rempstone Farm Hedgerow restoration project completed and achieved a total of **656m of hedge restoration** including hedge laying, 184m of hedgerow planting and 840 of protective fencing

*See an emerging list of case studies on the AONB website:*

[Case study: Destination Kimmeridge | Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(dorsetaonb.org.uk\)](#)

[Case study: RSPB Arne Middlebere 'Lookout' | Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(dorsetaonb.org.uk\)](#)

### d. LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

National Grid, through their [Landscape Enhancement Initiative](#), have supported three projects in the Dorset AONB that enhance landscape around their infrastructure. These are focussed in and around the Marshwood Vale and along the South Dorset Ridgeway, and consist of meadow restoration, dry stone wall restoration, hedgerow planting and management, river restoration, and other beneficial activities that deliver management guidelines set out in our [Landscape Character Assessment](#).

Two projects are wrapping up, with one – Linking Chalk, River & Vale – just getting going. The projects are delivered in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the National Trust. In total we have secured £600,000 of investment from the National Grid, matched by £300,000 of in-kind support, resulting in £1M of investment in the protected landscape since 2018.

#### Highlights:

- 15.4ha of meadow restoration in the Marshwood Vale and Brit Valley, at eleven sites
- 1.7ha of scrub clearance, at one site
- 350m of hedge laying, at three sites
- 36 new hedgerow trees, at six sites

*Investment through the LEI has allowed us to deliver significant landscape enhancement in the Dorset AONB, and we hope to apply for further funding from the National Grid later this year to continue this good work.*

[www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/reconnecting-the-landscape/](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/reconnecting-the-landscape/)

#### e. NATURE RECOVERY PLANNING – local and national

Production of a Nature Recovery Plan is part of our [Colchester Declaration](#) commitment. Every AONB in England is committed to producing a plan that will set out the important areas for wildlife and opportunities for enhancing the landscape for them.

The Dorset AONB has been working on the plan in-house and it is in the final stages of production. It will comprise of an introductory section, details for semi-natural grassland, broadleaved woodlands, wetland, lowland heathland, urban, coastal, and the farmed environment, for the whole AONB plus more detailed sections for each of the 35 terrestrial landscape character areas of the Dorset AONB. We have also been working with Dorset Environmental Records Centre to better incorporate details species information into our plans.

Information on the plan was presented in the [November Partnership Board](#).

#### Highlights:

- Secured £6,500 from Natural England to work with Dorset Environmental Records Centre to incorporate species information into our Nature Recover Plan. This will be achieved through:
  - Production of Biodiversity Character Area profiles for the AONB
  - An overarching synthesis report that highlights the most important species.
- Engaging with the National Association for AONBs on their Local Nature Recovery Strategy working group

*Work is nearing completion on the Nature Recovery Plan, and we hope to use our experiences of producing the plan to help inform the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which is about to be prepared by Dorset Council.*

## 4.2. CLIMATE

The AONB Partnership has recognised the need to reduce emissions from this landscape, enhance carbon sequestration and storage and adapting the landscape and our activities to enhance resilience in the face of a changing climate. In addition, we recognise in both policy and practice the need for additional renewable energy generation, and support applications which are of the right scale and materials for their location. One of the major opportunities for this landscape is to harness natural solutions which store and sequester carbon as well as absorb water and mitigate extreme heat events.

The AONB team has also provided input to the Dorset Council Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plan – the plan and reported actions can be found on the [Dorset Council website](#)





### a. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

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 has been extended to now run until March 2025 (4 years total), with a further investment of c. £1million (confirmed in May 2023). £772k of FiPL funds supported 86 projects in Years 1 & 2, with a further £224k of match funding secured (including farmer contributions). Over £300k of Year 3 (23/24) funding has already been allocated.

#### Highlights:

- 2335m of new native hedgerow was planted in 22/23 (FiPL total is 7498m)
- 1464 native trees were planted in 22/23 (FiPL total is 2061)
- 15 projects are improving soil health, including investment in a compost turner and associated demonstration and training events.
- The innovative hemp growing trial aiming to see if hemp could help in climate change mitigation was a success despite challenging weather conditions. Hemp was again seen retting in Dorset fields!

*“the importance of soil health for our farming systems and resource protection appears to be finally being more widely recognised, and it’s fantastic to have the FiPL programme to support projects and learning” .*

[Dorset AONB FiPL webpage.](#)

### b. COMMUNITY TREE PROJECT

With funding from Dorset Council, we are in the process of establishing a community tree project. We have engaged with parishes to better understand their needs and are pulling together a programme of events and training that will support communities to plant trees that will survive our future climate, that are in the right place and that will be appropriately cared for.

We are also working with Public Health Dorset to engage with four schools in West Dorset, raising the profile of trees and the benefits they bring.

#### Highlights:

- Engaged with 65 parishes via an online survey to find out their needs related to tree planting.
- Secure funding from Public Health Dorset to work with four schools in West Dorset.

*It’s going to be a busy year ahead, working with parishes to deliver support and training as well as engaging with upwards of 60 school children, including getting them out to help plan a new woodland.*

### c. LOW CARBON DORSET

Low Carbon Dorset was a five-year programme of activities to help stimulate growth in Dorset's low carbon economy and reduce its carbon footprint. It ran between 2018 and Spring 2023.

The programme offered free technical support and grant funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to businesses, public-sector and community organisations across Dorset (Dorset Council and BCP Council areas). It helped Dorset based organisations to improve energy efficiency, increase the use of renewable energy, and aid the development of new low carbon products.

The programme was initiated by Dorset Council (DC) and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), working together to secure funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and was hosted by Dorset Council.

An independent final evaluation of the project for the EU and UK Government was produced by Ash Futures. Email [lowcarbondonset@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:lowcarbondonset@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) to request a copy of the full report (PDF). An executive summary is available on the [Low Carbon Dorset website](https://www.lowcarbondonset.org.uk/).

#### Highlights:

Over the lifetime of the project, it has delivered:

- 211 grants totalling £6,132,112, and £17.3m total investment in low-carbon projects in Dorset
- 9,169 tonnes annual reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>e
- 12.78MW of renewable energy capacity installed

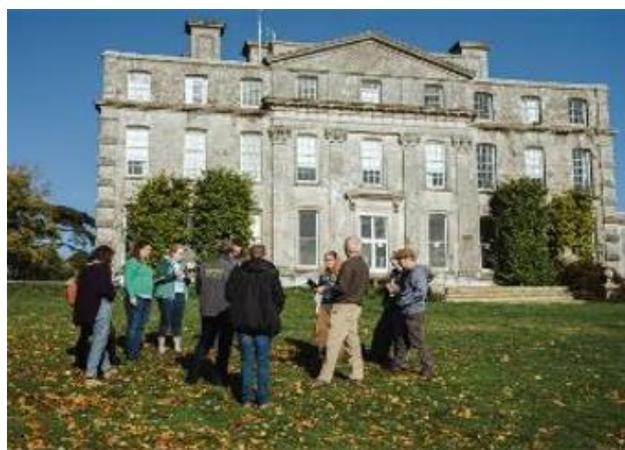
*Funding from Dorset Council's allocation of Shared Prosperity Fund money is being used to secure a small team to continue delivering low carbon technical advice for SMEs and Community groups in the Dorset Council area.*

<https://www.lowcarbondonset.org.uk/>

### 4.3. PEOPLE

This section explores the team's work in helping people make a connection to this nationally-important landscape and its special qualities. Some activities are specifically focussed on reaching underserved audiences in support of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles.

Team members provide strategic input to Health & Nature Dorset, the Dorset Tourism Association, Food from England, etc.





## a. STEPPING INTO NATURE

Over the last 7 years, Stepping into Nature has been working in partnership to provide opportunities for older people, people living with long term health conditions and carers enjoy nature. To achieve this in the past year we have been delivering social group activities, creating self led resources, providing grants for local community groups and upskilling the sector with dementia awareness sessions. This last year was also the final year of project delivery as National Lottery Community Funding ended in April 2023. The project staff will be using underspend to stay in post for around a year to develop the legacy of the Stepping into Nature project and finish a couple remaining outputs such as history walk guides and relaxing one minute videos of beautiful places.

### Highlights:

- Through partners delivered 69 group activities with around 500 attendees.
- Seasons of Stories books and audiobook created including summer, autumn and winter (only winter audiobook now) and distributed 500 of each of the books.
- 10 short films created showcasing the beauty of the landscape to help people know what expect when visiting new places, inspire a connection and relax.
- Animated Dorset tales created captivating the history and uniqueness of Dorset's landscape.
- Held a conference to share learning and provide networking with over 100 attendees
- Continue to build work through the Health and Nature Dorset collaboration through delivery of staff wellbeing projects and research into barriers people with long term conditions experience to access nature.

*"We're only at the beginning of what the Dorset AONB can achieve in partnership to address inequalities of access to nature for people's wellbeing. We've got some exciting projects in the pipeline!"*

[Read more here.](#)

## b. VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Dorset's outstanding landscape is the main reason most people visit the area. The landscape underpins the tourism economy and plays a huge role in supporting local services. Visitor management is a loose term which encompasses a number of different projects. In essence, though, it is about managing the impact of visitors so that Dorset AONB retains its natural beauty and special qualities, while helping people to enjoy, understand and engage with the place. Given the popularity and volume of visitors to the coast, it is unsurprising that much of the work is focused along the Jurassic Coast. (Dorset AONB, through the Visitor Tourism and Access Manager, oversees delivery of visitor management projects along the whole of the Jurassic Coast, including East Devon). In the last year, projects have focused on reducing, rationalising and improving physical interpretation and information along the coast. Another significant project has been improving access for all in the AONB, using funds allocated by Defra.

### Highlights:

- 8 access improvement projects completed, improving access for all across Dorset AONB
- 8 new or replacement coastal interpretation panels installed and (perhaps more importantly!) 17 removed
- 12 Dorset AONB walks tested by volunteers, which will feature in a new *Walking in the Dorset National Landscape* book

*This year, visitor management projects have focused on decluttering the landscape by reducing and improving signage, and improving access for all to the natural environment. While there is a huge amount of work still to do in both these areas, it feels like real progress has been made.*

## c. ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Finding out what young people think about the countryside was the starting point to a new strand of work aimed at increasing our engagement with 11-24 year olds. Over 800 young people responded to a survey - which was developed and run by 11 young researchers - supported by Participation People and the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) programme.

The findings of the survey have kickstarted new conversations between organisations and landowners in Dorset, with a long-term Vision being developed to help create new opportunities for young people to explore and enjoy the landscape. A second FIPL grant has been awarded to explore one of the priorities highlighted in the survey – the need for events focussed specifically at 11-18 year olds.

During the Summer Term 2022, the Dorset AONB team delivered pilot activities for the Urban Nature Project on behalf of Dorset Museum. Aimed mainly at KS3 pupils (age 11-14 year olds), we successfully connected with science departments at secondary schools in the Bridport and Beaminster, engaging 251 students in outdoor workshops in the summer term.

### Highlights:

- Over 1000 young people reached through surveys and educational activities.
- Valuable insights from survey, with transport, events, training and visitor welcome identified as opportunities to work on in future.
- New partnership with Public Health Dorset, planning to provide tree focussed curriculum activities for Reception aged children in West Dorset.

*"We are really committed to the idea of co-creating activities with and for young people, so the survey of perceptions of the countryside created by a group of young people was a fantastic start and provides a strong foundation for future work." Caroline Kelly, Dorset AONB Team*

[Link to Participation Peoples 'Young Researchers' report](#)  
[More information about Urban Nature Project](#)

#### d. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

To help keep the AONB special for future generations, each year the Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund supports projects that will help to conserve, enhance, protect and celebrate the AONB by furthering the aims of the Management Plan. In 2022/23 we were keen to ensure projects involving young people, from a diverse range of backgrounds, benefitted widely from the fund. In total we supported 10 projects to a value of 14,059.91.

##### Highlights:

- 600 young people involved in workshops, activities, tree planting, beach cleans & performances across the AONB
- Over 5000m of species rich hedgerows & 1800 trees planted to enhance biodiversity & carbon capture
- Successful water quality & biodiversity assessments undertaken on the River Axe to inform EA action on future water restoration
- 3 riverside areas successfully cleared of invasive Himalayan Balsam & reed beds cleared at Pymore SNCI
- 1 newly qualified drystone wall instructor trained up & 2 training courses completed.
- Over 2,200 hours of volunteer time committed across the projects

*“It’s a pleasure to be able to support local communities and organisations bring their projects to fruition through the SDF fund. This year it is was delightful to see young people, our future custodians of the AONB, at the forefront of this.”*

**Case studies** of several previous projects supported by the SDF fund can be found [on the Dorset AONB website](#)

#### e. PROMOTING THE AONB

Engaging people in the landscape is central to many of our projects but we also ensure core communication and engagement work reaches out to people who live, work or visit the AONB, often linking to local and seasonal opportunities as they arise.

Our Dawn to Dusk programme was set up to engage people who had taken part in the Green Space Dark Skies event, continuing their journey of discovery into the landscape. Over 250 people joined in the range of walks, talks and activities which showed off the AONB landscape in a very different light.

Online engagement has gone from strength to strength thanks to additional Defra-supported training and strategy work last year. Social media engagement has increased by 20% across Facebook and Instagram and a series of campaigns highlighting the special qualities of the AONB have had outstanding reach.

- Increased engagement across all social media platforms: 385 posts published; total followers for Twitter 9607, Facebook 4,400 and Instagram 1769; 8631 engagements (likes, shares, comments) and 234,823 impressions (no. of times content viewed).
- New social media campaigns focussed on Trees, Seasonal Wildlife and Places to Explore.
- Dorset Magazine continues to support us with a page or spread dedicated to the Dorset AONB in each issue to cover elements of the Dorset AONB special qualities as well as our active projects.
- The Dorset AONB [Annual Review](#) was well received by Dorset Council councillors and other partners.
- Take the View [photo competition](#) launched in April 2023, with support from Dorset Magazine and Castle Cameras.

*“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.” Dawn to Dusk participant*

**Website:** [www.dorsetaonb.org.uk](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk); **Twitter:** [@DorsetAONB](https://twitter.com/DorsetAONB); **Facebook:** [DorsetAONB](https://www.facebook.com/DorsetAONB); **Instagram:** [@dorsetaonb](https://www.instagram.com/dorsetaonb)

## 4.4. PLACE

This section encompasses the team's role in place-making – input to the planning system and conserving, enhancing and promoting the area's culture and heritage.



### a. PLANNING PROTOCOL WORK

The Team recorded 219 consultations during the year, which represents an uplift from previous years. The consultations include planning proposals at various stages, including pre-application advice, EIA screening/scoping advice, outline/full planning applications and discharge/variation of conditions. Part of the uplift results from the inclusion of felling licence consultations, with efforts to manage Ash dieback being a key driver.

#### Highlights:

- Applications for solar farms within the AONB and its setting have formed a large proportion of major casework. One notable case within the AONB, at Cruyton Farm, will be subject to a public inquiry, where the Team will be involved as an interested party. The appeal has been recovered by the Secretary of State, meaning that the final decision is elevated to the most senior decision maker, who will receive a recommendation from an Inspector. This is probably because the case presents issues that are considered to be of national importance (I.e. the principle of allowing major/impactful solar within nationally designated landscapes).
- The Statera proposal or a nationally significant solar farm between Chickerell and Corton, partly within the AONB, has been dropped following pre-application feedback. The applicant has chosen to focus on a battery storage scheme near to Chickerell and it remains to be seen if a reduced solar proposal may be brought forward in the future.

## b. DORSET FOOD & DRINK

Trumpet blower, critical friend, knowledge bank, and a meze of ideas. Variety really is the spice of life in Dorset, and with a collection of some of the most varied landscapes in the country - comes a fantastic array of very distinctive local food and drink-even one with a Geographical indicator - [Dorset Blue Cheese](#)! An independent community interest company since 2017, Dorset Food & Drink has a membership of over 120 food, drink and hospitality businesses who produce, serve, and sell great local products. Businesses join for a host of reasons. Some are start-ups in need of support and expert advice. Others are looking to develop new collaborations and take advantage of hospitality and retail opportunities. Whilst others value being included in the Dorset Food & Drink website listings and being able to display and use the Dorset Food & Drink logo – an established symbol of quality, and local provenance.

### Highlights:

- An unexpected encounter at Green Space Dark Skies at Maiden Castle led to a successful NLHF bid to help connect ethnic minority community groups and individuals with nature and discover the wellbeing benefits.
- Partnering with Dorset Farmers Market to increase opportunities for our members to trade regularly at established markets.
- Reimagining DF&D to future proof and explore opportunities for a more diverse and inclusive Dorset Food & Drink future.

*This is an exciting new phase for us, and we want people to feel it, live it, eat it, shop it, relax, holiday and be proud to buy [Dorset Food & Drink](#).*

## c. ART IN THE LANDSCAPE

Over 500 people gathered on Maiden Castle in June to celebrate 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 UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK. This series of mass gatherings celebrated nature, our responsibility to protect it and everyone's right to explore the countryside. Using low impact lights, we created magical, memorable moments outdoors and you can [see the film created here](#).

The AONB team have continued to support the National Association for AONBs with their Art in the Landscape initiative, currently bidding for sizeable funds for a national scale creative project. If successful, Dorset AONB will be one of six hubs of activity aimed at engaging and inspiring people who are not regular visitors to the countryside.

### Highlights:

- Green Space Dark Skies made new connections with communities and the landscape in Dorset, nurtured by Activate Performing Arts.
- Dorchester rapper Isaiah Dreads and choreographer Subathra Subramaniam joined writer Zakiya McKenzie in devising a unique atmosphere for the Dorset event
- Over 500+ participants were armed with special low impact lamps to create the spectacle.
- Supporting development of the spectacular arts festival [Inside Out Dorset Festival '23](#) at one special, accessible location (to be announced 28<sup>th</sup> May!)

*“Working on large scale arts projects has given a fresh dimension to our work, trying out innovative engagements, opening up new ways of doing things” Sue Dampney, Dorset AONB team.*

#### d. DORSET FINGERPOST PROJECT

Fingerposts are an iconic, traditional feature of the Dorset countryside. Many have fallen into disrepair and Dorset Council no longer has a remit to restore them. Working with expert Roger Bond (Normtec) and his band of volunteers we are able to support & subsidise their restoration.

##### Highlights:

- 2022/23 saw 40 fingerposts restored (include. full restoration at Church Knowle, Knowlton & Leigh, Studland & Creech)
- 11 currently underway & 12 in the pipeline

*“Working closely with local parishes it’s been another successful year of fingerpost restorations for Roger & his dedicated volunteers, and a win for local heritage.”*

Further information on the project can be found [on the project page of the Dorset AONB website](#).

#### e. LOST ORCHARDS

The AONB Partnership supported the development and publication of the Lost Orchards book by Liz Copas and Nick Poole, to record, publicise and celebrate the unique apple heritage of Dorset, in particular in the area to the immediate northeast of Bridport. About two-thirds of Britain’s small, traditional orchards have been lost since 1960. The loss of an orchard means the loss of ecological diversity, community knowledge and the intricacy of local distinctiveness. In 2007, the pomologist Liz Copas and cidemaker Nick Poole began a quest to find and identify old varieties of cider apple trees around Dorset. It was a search that lasted over a decade and took them across the county, from farm to farm, village to village, searching forgotten orchards, neglected hedges and the corners of cottage gardens.

##### Highlights:

- The Lost Orchards charts the journey Liz and Nick took to find, taste, propagate and make cider from Dorset’s forgotten apple varieties, such as Golden Ball, Kings Favourite, Yaffle, Dewbit, Golly Knapp, Tom Legg, Best Bearer and Symes Seedlings.
- The book is also an illustrated guide to the apple varieties they discovered, and an important history of West Country apples and orchards.
- This hopeful story will resonate widely and inspire others around the country – and around the world – to look closely at their surroundings and take steps to rediscover, celebrate and conserve the orchards that make their locality special.

*‘This fine book is an invaluable guide to many half-forgotten and unknown Dorset cider apples.’* James Crowden, author of Cider Country

The book is available from Dorset publisher Little Toller Books at [Lost Orchards by Liz Copas and Nick Poole - Little Toller Books](#)

##### Photo credits:

NATURE: Cattle grazing (c) Mark Singleton; Rivers (c) Nick Gray; Tree seedlings (c) Purbeck’s Precious Past PEOPLE: Stepping into Nature © Ben Ingram; Eggardon Hill (c) Bridport Youth Dance; Lorna Rees, Dawn to Dusk (c) Caroline Richards  
PLACE: Green Space Dark Skies (c) Walk the Plank Phil Young x2

*All other photos taken by Dorset AONB Team*

## ITEM 5: 2021-2022 PROVISIONAL PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTS

ITEM FOR	Information	REPORT BY	AONB Manager
<b>SUMMARY</b>	The Dorset AONB team continues to be successful in demonstrating good funding leverage in terms of income generated from a modest local contribution to the core budget. Despite being the year after the closing of our largest project (the South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership), significant additional funds and value have been levered in this financial year. Below is a draft account summary which will be presented to Defra as per our reporting requirements.		
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	This is a report on past income and expenditure, so has no implications on future funding		
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	The Dorset AONB Board commends the funding leverage demonstrated by these accounts		

### 5.1. CORE FINANCE

Despite an increase in core costs from budget, the core team managed to secure significantly more earned income (from project management and time contributions to projects).

The agreement with Defra stipulates that they can contribute no more than 75% of the core costs. This year, Defra's contribution to core costs was at 68.1%; Dorset Council contributed 18.9% towards core expenditure.

Core income	budget	actual
Defra	£ 207,574	£ 203,220
Dorset Council	£ 56,300	£ 56,300
Earned income / other grant	£ 12,891	£ 38,874
TOTAL	£ 276,765	£ 298,394
Core expenditure	budget	actual
Staff, ENI, Pens,	£ 251,365	£ 270,313
Travel	£ 4,400	£ 5,011
Training	£ 3,000	£ 3,834
Accommodation & Office	£ 6,000	£ 6,150
Partnership PR	£ 5,000	£ 3,510
Partnership Running Costs	£ 4,000	£ 3,575
Monitoring, research & guidance	£ 3,000	£ 6,000
TOTAL	£ 276,765	£ 298,394

## 5.2. PROJECT FINANCE

NB partner spend and volunteer time have not been included here – they will be included in an Annual Review

	DIRECT VALUE			Major source of cash income (excluding Single Pot)
	DIRECT EXPENDITURE	Single pot	Cash income	
Wild Purbeck	£ 112,944	£ 35	£ 112,909	Wytch Farm s106
Community Woodlands	£ 10,891	£ -	£ 10,891	Forestry Commission reserve
LEI – Ridgeway	£ 77,467	£ 5,000	£ 72,467	National Grid
LEI - Linking	£ 40,186	£ -	£ 40,186	National Grid
LEI - Marshwood	£ 8,674	£ -	£ 8,674	National Grid
Rural Roads - AONB	£ 7,105	£ 6,000	£ 1,105	AONB reserve
Local food	£ 36,134	£ 12,000	£ 24,134	DF&D CIC
SDF	£ 17,415	£ 15,480	£ 1,935	Refunded expenditure
Stepping into Nature	£ 182,293	£ 20,000	£ 162,293	Community Lottery
JC visitor management	£ 30,887	£ 8,000	£ 22,887	Dorset Council; earned income
Urban Nature Project	£ 5,275		£ 5,275	NHM via Dorset County Museum
Rivers	£ 39,738	£ 2,000	£ 37,738	Catchment Partnership
Nature Recovery Plan	£ 650	£ 650	£ -	
GRCF Purbeck Heaths	£ 89,259		£ 89,259	Wytch Farm s106; NE
GRCF Hills & Vales	£ 131	£ 131	£ -	
FIPL	£ 537,381		£ 537,381	Defra
COMF	£ 25,045		£ 25,045	COMF via Dorset Council
ELMS	£ 500		£ 500	AONB reserve
Access for All (Capital)	£ 77,113		£ 77,113	Defra
DERC AWI	£ 10,000		£ 10,000	Dorset Council
IOD2023	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ -	
Youth participation	£ 12,645	£ 500	£ 12,145	FIPL (Defra)
Apples	£ 1,500	£ 1,500	£ -	
EDI access offer	£ 5,141	£ 5,141	£ -	
S Purbeck NNR & NRN	£ 308	£ 308	£ -	
NAAONB Art in the Landscape	£ 1,000	£ 1,000	£ -	
Evaluation framework (Winchester)	£ 740	£ 740	£ -	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 1,332,422</b>	<b>£ 80,485</b>	<b>£ 1,251,938</b>	

## 5.3. SUMMARY

- Total direct spend by the AONB Partnership is £1,630,816 (core and projects)
- Total 'added value' has not yet been included.

## 5.4. LEVERAGE RATIOS

- Direct spend delivered for each pound contributed by core partners (Defra & Dorset Council)
  - £1 core funding levered £6.28
  - £1 Defra core contribution levered £8.02
  - £ Dorset Council core contribution levered £28.97

## ITEM 6: NAAONB-led National Landscapes re-brand

ITEM FOR	Information	REPORT BY	AONB Manager & Culture, Community & Learning Officer
<b>SUMMARY</b>	The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has led a Defra-sponsored rebrand in response to the Glover Review recommendation on behalf of all AONBs in England.		
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	There will be a resource implication to adopt and roll out a new visual identity. Some of this may be provided in additional core grant from Defra (subject to spending review opportunities) and some will have to be found from within our existing annual settlements.		

- 6.1. The Landscapes (Glover) Review’s recommendation 24 was that AONBs be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes.  
While we await a government response to purposes, powers and resources (having made significant input into policy recommendations during the consultation phase), Defra has given the NAAONB a mandate and financial support to pursue the re-branding of AONBs as National Landscapes.  
Legally, these areas will remain Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – there is no proposed change to legislation. Dorset AONB will be known as the Dorset National Landscape with the strapline ‘an area of outstanding natural beauty’.
- 6.2. Unification of the AONBs’ brands will strengthen our position nationally and enhance how we are perceived by others on a national stage, and our collective status. The NAAONB hopes that by taking leadership on this point, the moral responsibility lies with government to deliver on the enhanced powers, purposes and resources.
- 6.3. This re-brand underpins the NAAONB ambition that AONBs / National Landscapes are considered to be the landscape designation of choice for the 21st Century and beyond. This is spelled out in the [NAAONB prospectus](#) launched in 2022.
- 6.4. The NAAONB was offered £120,000 from Defra to develop the rebrand programme in readiness for a public launch at a date to be agreed in 2023. The NAAONB AGM approved accepting the offer, in order for the AONB network to lead and be in control of changes that will help us to achieve our collective stated ambitions.
- 6.5. A rebrand steering group was established drawing in staff from around the AONB network (including the Dorset AONB Culture, Community & Learning Officer). This steering group oversaw a tendering process which led to the commissioning of creative agency [Nice and Serious](#). This agency then developed a creative council, which brought in voices and opinions from a wide range of people, including a focus on underserved communities. Nice and Serious have developed a brand toolkit which provides a vision, mission, brand principles, brand values for use by AONB teams.
- 6.6. Our vision: Beautiful, thriving landscapes that all people feel part of
- 6.7. Our mission: Protect and regenerate our landscapes and make sure everyone can enjoy them
- 6.8. Our brand principles:
  - **BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER**  
We're not landowners. The only way to achieve our goal is with the support of strong, inclusive partnerships. So we bring people and organisations together — supporting collaboration that not only protects and regenerates our landscapes, but opens them up for all to truly enjoy.

- **EMBRACE THE JOURNEY**

We're not perfect, but we are open with our approach to change. Talking about what we're doing towards nature recovery and restoration. And being transparent about our journey to becoming a more inclusive, equitable and diverse organisation – inside and out. Keeping a positive outlook by celebrating the work we've done so far.

- **KEEP MOVING FORWARDS**

Our landscapes are under threat from climate change and biodiversity loss. To keep moving forwards we need to protect and regenerate them. We help our community to understand the history of our landscapes to help shape them for the future. Evolving as nature does by always maintaining a forward looking approach – working with agility, optimism and staying open to new ideas.

- **LISTEN AND AMPLIFY**

Listen to the needs of the landscapes and our community. Amplifying different perspectives with policy makers and bringing new ideas and stories to the fore.

6.9. The rebranding toolkit also provides direction on tone of voice: INCLUSIVE, UNITED, BRIGHT, SENSORIAL, INQUISITIVE

6.10. The re-brand project is at the stage of developing a visual identity for the NAONB and each individual AONB. Each AONB is to be identified by a single icon logo and the name – for this AONB, 'Dorset National Landscape'. A number of other icons are to be developed for our use which should enable us to highlight the AONB's special qualities.

## APPENDIX: detailed AONB team activity log

This content is in addition to the Team Activity report in item 4

### a. PURBECK HEATHS NNR / WILD GRAZING UNIT

#### Additional detail:

AONB Team Manager chairs the Purbeck Heath NNR Steering Group and the Wilder Grazing Unit Working Group. These groups bring together the landowning bodies to oversee and implement delivery of the NNR Management Plan and the specific objectives of the wilder grazing unit. A key principle across the heaths is to reinstate natural processes at this landscape scale, alongside enhancing people's engagement and opportunities to connect with nature.

### b. WEST DORSET RIVERS & COASTAL STREAMS

#### Additional detail:

- 32 volunteers engaged in Himalayan balsam control, pond clearance and bankside tree canopy raising.
- 10 volunteers trained in citizen science methods on the River Char
- Four walks with 82 attendees, and two talks with 85 attendees
- A farmer workshop in sediment management with 11 attendees plus three follow up visits. 10 farm finance advisory visits.
- 400m of habitat enhancement at three sites, focussing on bank stabilisation, canopy raising and invasive species control.
- 12km of Himalayan balsam control on the River Asker. This is the fourth year of management, and the infestation is coming under control.

### c. WYTCH FARM LANDSCAPE AND ACCESS ENHANCEMENT FUND

#### Detailed outputs and outcomes: Funded projects include

- FWAG - Currenden Farm hedge planting Phase2 Hedge planting 260 (m) & Fencing 520 (m)
- DC Purbeck Park (Norden) to Studland cycleway Access Improvement (m) TBC
- FWAG - Kingswood Hedge Project Hedge Restoration (74 m), Hedgerow Trees x 8 & Hedgerow Fencing (249 m)
- Purbecks Invasive Plants-audit & control Phase2 Small plants (38 locations)R&hoddi management (total restoration 17 Ha)
- NT\_Beryl Bikes to Studland Staff time, Access\_Bikes x 10 & Access\_Bike Bays x 4
- Lulworth Lake Rhododendron Management (2 Ha)
- FWAG\_Rempstone Hedge Phase3 Hedge Restoration (288 m), Hedgerow planting (472 m), & Hedgerow Fencing (1520 m)
- DC\_Sharford Bridge Access Improved - Causeway installed (m), 10

### d. LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

#### Detailed outputs and outcomes:

##### Magical Marshwood Vale

Delivered over the course of four years:

- Restored 16.4 hectares of lowland meadow and 7.2ha of scrub clearance, giving a total of 23.6ha of meadow restoration.
- 2,155 metres of hedge laying.
- 129 hedgerow trees have been planted
- 72 Orchard trees have been planted.
- 8 ponds have been restored.

- 150m of river restoration is complete.
- Established a wild daffodil nursery at Washingpool Farm to supplement future meadow restoration with locally grown plants.
- 45 volunteer sessions with 635 attending totalling 3,235 hours.

### Reconnecting the Ridgeway

Total project outputs delivered over three years:

- 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

### Linking

To be delivered over the coming two and a half years:

- 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

## **CLIMATE**

### **a. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES**

#### **Detailed outputs and outcomes:**

#### **In 2022/23**

48 more farmers have received grants in 22/23 making the cumulative total for FiPL programme 121. Six farm groups or clusters have been supported.

Outputs relating to the four themes include:

#### **Nature**

- 979 ha of existing habitat managed for biodiversity
- 269 ha of new habitat created for biodiversity
- 2753 m of existing hedgerow managed
- 5 ponds restored
- Equipment including sheep handling systems, and bracken bruisers have been purchased to help land management of diverse grassland sites.
- 15ha of wildflower rich grassland created.

#### **Climate**

- 2335m of new native hedgerow planted
- 1464 native trees planted

- 15 projects are improving soil health, including investment in a compost turner and associated demonstration and training events.
- Innovative hemp growing trial delivered

### People

- 13 projects making the landscape more inclusive for visitors including installing a wheelchair accessible pathway at The Shire at Crocker Moor Care Farm
- 6 project delivering educational farm visits, including the residential stays offered at Madgalen Farm for groups including disadvantaged children, young carers, refugees, and children who have been trafficked into the UK.
- Purchase of a wheelchair accessible trailer for farm visits

### Place

- The Holditch Tower has been stabilised, meaning that it can be removed from the Scheduled Monument 'at risk' register.
- 874 ha of land management through regenerative farming.
- 20 projects have increased the resilience of nature friendly sustainable businesses.

## b. COMMUNITY TREE PROJECT

### Detailed outputs and outcomes:

- Engaged with 65 parishes via an online survey to find out their needs related to tree planting.
- Key areas of support were identified as:
  - Introduction to the challenges of tree planting and management
  - Training in site selection and woodland design
  - Support for tree planting and aftercare
  - Support for Tree Wardens
  - Grants towards tree planting, aftercare, and tree nurseries
- £2,000 secured from Public Health Dorset to help deliver an education programme, piloted at four West Dorset primary Schools.
- Engaged educational consultant Rowan Beecham, to develop and deliver this programme of works.

## c. LOW CARBON DORSET

### Activity and Outputs – programme lifetime

- 801 applications for support from Dorset's business, community and public sectors
- 211 grants totalling £6,132,112
- £17.3m total investment in low-carbon projects in Dorset
- 9,169 tonnes annual reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>e (with a potential further 1,000 tonnes to confirm)
- 12.78MW of renewable energy capacity installed
- 67 homes with improved energy efficiency
- 7 new low carbon products developed
- 1,188,378 kwh/yr energy use reduction in public sector buildings

### Legacy resources

These include a range of Case Studies (some of which are being updated with client feedback from the evaluation). The Guide to Reducing Emissions is also available, again with updated sections planned, to share more learning from the project, such as decarbonising in listed settings. The Low Carbon Dorset website will be

maintained until relevant content can be transferred to the Dorset Council website. An exhibition of professional photographs, telling the story and outcomes of the EU funded Low Carbon Dorset programme, through the people and places supported, is also in progress. This exhibition will help to highlight the work done to date but can also be used at events publicising how Dorset Council will be supporting organisations to decarbonise going forward.

#### Future plans

Funding from Dorset Council's allocation of Shared Prosperity Fund money is being used to secure a small team to continue delivering low carbon technical advice for SMEs and Community groups in the Dorset Council area.

This will comprise:

- 2 x Technical officers
- 1 x Project Officer
- 1 x Project Support Officer

The team and its activities will be managed by the Dorset Council Sustainability team.

Plans are also underway to create a small grant pot for capital projects, again for SME and Community organisations in the Dorset Council area, which the team will administer. Details are yet to be published but the grant pot could be used to support eligible measures in the decarbonisation plans delivered by the technical officers. Dorset Council will continue to use the Low Carbon Dorset name for this two year project which started in April 2023. Low Carbon Dorset has an excellent reputation for its independent technical advice and support and brand recognition is strong.

## PEOPLE

### a. STEPPING INTO NATURE

**Detailed outputs and outcomes:**

[For the full Stepping into Nature 2022-23 report please view our slide deck.](#)

### b. VISITOR MANAGEMENT

**Detailed outputs and outcomes:**

#### **Access for All (A4A) project**

Over £77,000 of Defra allocated funding has been used for access improvements, including for those with reduced mobility and/or those who need mobility aids such as wheelchairs or scooters.

- 4 formerly muddy, inaccessible multi-user paths have been resurfaced, making the short walk into the market town of Bridport from nearby villages a much more appealing prospect, as well as allowing access for people with mobility aids and pushchairs
- Multi-user path improvements have been carried out between Bridport and the popular resort of West Bay, something which the local community have requested for many years
- A new multi-user route is being created between Bridport and a new housing development
- Path improvements around Blackdown (adjacent to Hardy's Monument) have also been undertaken-making this scenic part of Dorset AONB more accessible to all.
- Purbeck has also benefitted, through undertaking of topological and ecological surveys to advise upcoming multi-user path improvements from the sustainable transport hub of Norden/ Purbeck Park

[Dorset Council News - Access improvements in Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty made possible thanks to Defra funding](#)

## Interpretation and access improvement projects

Funded by Coastal Communities Fund (£17,000):

- 2 new panels installed in West Bay, at the start and end of the Old Railway Line multi-user route which connects West Bay to Bridport, engaging people with the natural landscape and wildlife, as well as encouraging people to walk and cycle
- 1 new panel installed at the West Bay play area, replacing 9 old panels
- 1 new panel installed at the western end of West Bay, along the Esplanade, warning of rockfalls and landslips
- New beach matting at West Bay has made access to the beach and the sea possible for people in wheelchairs and pushchairs
- 6 new picnic benches, 3 of which are suitable for wheelchair users
- 2 new access gates along Old Railway Line, making access easier for all

Funded by the South West Coast Path Association and local partners (£5,000)

- A new Jurassic Coast and local interest panel has been installed at Branscombe beach, replacing 4 old and scruffy out-of-date panels. This project also included installation of a 'CoastSnap' fixed point photography point for coastal monitoring purposes (the results go to Plymouth Coastal Observatory and are shared with partners)

Funded by local partners (£2,800)

- A new panel with information about the Jurassic Coast has been installed on Sidmouth Esplanade. Prior to this, there was no physical information about the Jurassic Coast in this key gateway location

## c. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

### Detailed outputs and outcomes:

10 applications with a total request of just over £16,000 were considered by the SDF Panel in June 2022. The panel were keen particularly keep to support projects which encouraged young people's involvement in the AONB. In the end £14,059.91 of grant funding was dispersed to support the following 10 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](#)
- **Dorset Himalayan Balsam-Free Zones project**: Targeting the removal of patches of Himalayan balsam in the Sydling Brook and River Cerne using new techniques to eradicate the plant and aid the re-establishment of native plants.
- **Sutton Poyntz Hedgerows**: Planting 250m of mixed hedgerow for biodiversity with assistance from young people with special needs.
- **Pymore Reed Bed**: Clearing and cutting 1/3 of the reed bed on the River Brit at Pymore SSSI for nature to thrive.
- **Trenches and Trees on the River Axe**: Exploratory work into the re-establishment of an ancient paleochannel to stabilise the river & tree planting work by young people.
- **Water Quality Monitoring and Invertebrate Sampling on the River Axe**: Equipment and training to enable volunteers to sample water quality and biodiversity, with results going to the Environment Agency to inform action on water restoration.
- **The Pippos of Portland**: 2 beach-cleans and a theatre show for children around Chesil / Abbotsbury area. Teaching young people to care for the coast, nature and the environment. You can see highlights from the project in a film [here](#)

- **Bridport Dance:** Artists fees for a under 18s summer art and story-telling workshop and an outdoor dance performance on Eggardon Hill. View the film [here](#)
- **Dorset Community Action Network:** a volunteer led hedgerow mapping & condition survey project along the Jubilee Trail, with a long term aim to help restore the hedgerow network in Dorset. Further information [here](#)

#### d. PROMOTING THE AONB

##### **Detailed outputs and outcomes:**

Dawn to Dusk programme of events attracted 250 people, 60% were first time attenders to AONB events and overall the events received 5-star rating from 85% of respondents to the survey.

Seasonal social media Campaigns:

- Summer - hidden gems to explore
- Celebrating autumn
- Winter – See the Trees
- Spring spots #seasonal wildlife

Other social media content:

Promise to Love Dorset/Sust. Tourism/travel & visitor management; Videos in the landscape; CPRE star count; Big Garden watch; Promotion of our grant funds; Promotion of festivals & events; Photo competition promotion.

## PLACE

#### a. DORSET FOOD & DRINK

##### **Detailed outputs and outcomes:**

Celebrating the great tastes and makes of Dorset

Whether it's a hard-to-find local cheese, funky craft ales, seasonal treats, interesting liqueurs, a unique piece of jewellery, or perhaps something beautiful or functional made from upcycled items, we are proud to support our local producers and makers. It makes sense to keep it local, and get to know the people who make, bake, brew, cook, farm, fish, sew, grow, craft, and create lovely things.

The creativity and resourcefulness of food and drink businesses throughout a most tumultuous couple of years has been a constant source of inspiration, and it's been our pleasure to help, support and showcase our members and their businesses as they get back on track to what they love doing- bringing top quality food and drink to visitors and local consumers here in Dorset and beyond.

Whilst the core vision and objectives of Dorset Food & Drink remains almost unchanged. The pandemic sharpened our focus, and we are shifting towards a more sustainable, mindful approach to our work, our members, and consumers.

With a food culture and economy to be proud of, our farmers, fishermen and fisherwomen, bakers, cheese makers, chocolatiers, brewers, coffee roasters, vineyards, dairies, ice cream makers, hotels, restaurants, and cafes all contribute to a diverse and vibrant food and drink offering.

But we also get out and about, hosting our own events, food fairs, pop up markets and festivals, where we want our consumers, members, and stakeholders to feel it, live it, eat it, shop it, relax, holiday in it, and be proud to 'shop' and buy in Dorset Food & Drink .

Reimagining Dorset Food and Drink for 2023

Everything we do is about helping local food and drink businesses; from developing best practice to getting ahead of the game and delighting new audiences. You'll find innovative producers, well known brands, and

fantastic produce at every turn, from the staunchly traditional to the spectacularly modern. Dorset's expansive farmland and coastlines, quiet market towns and villages produce some of the highest quality food, and it's all on our doorstep!

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, our farming heritage and explore opportunities for a more diverse and inclusive Dorset Food & Drink future.

This will start with a review of the current membership structure and levelling up to a flat membership fee which will enable more members to join or re-join as the rise in cost of living and impact on their businesses, meant that choices had to be made about targeting spend. However much they liked and supported Dorset Food & Drink, it was not a top priority when balanced against making a living or keeping their business afloat. The new fees and membership model is scheduled to be offered at the end of May 2023.

#### Breaking Bread, Making Connections

In March 2023, DF&D were successful in securing a FIPL ([Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme](#)) grant - which will enable Dorset Food & Drink and [Dorset Race Equality Council](#) (DREC) to work together to build confidence for ethnic minority community groups and individuals living in Dorset to enjoy and benefit from visiting farms and spaces within their local protected landscape.

Access and connectivity to nature, the landscape and wellbeing are key in our forward plans.

This project will deliver four food events at farms in Dorset and Cranborne Chase AONB's for communities, in summer and early autumn of 2023- offering opportunities for cultural exchange, strengthening communities, and celebrating local food. Engagement with DREC highlighted that some people would not access nature on their own, as they would fear for their safety, preferring to access the natural environment in big family groups.

Dorset Food & Drink propose to undertake a gentle programme of community engagement in collaboration, and with guidance from DREC, to get to know the community groups and discover who is keen on taking part and developing projects with DF&D partners. Our approach to engagement is key, and we are mindful that to ensure a successful outcome, trust must be developed first.

We do not take this lightly.

Our aim is to pilot and co-create food-related events with underserved communities in Dorset to facilitate and introduce access to rural heritage for people who frequently experience barriers in doing so. We will work with foodies, farmers, chefs, home cooks and communities and creative communicators to interpret landscape heritage of those sites to an underserved audience, to create convivial shared meals which derive from the landscape, as well as creating a warm welcome for everyone.

We recognise that people from ethnic backgrounds do not always access or engage in the natural environment because of perceived or actual - negative experiences, and that different cultures may wish to access the spaces differently.

At a time when the world is becoming ever more interconnected and interdependent, diversity is a strategy for opportunity. All too often we shy away from engagement because it seems too complex, too unpredictable and can't easily be done from 'the office'.

DF&D recognise there's a need to go out into diverse communities to understand them, engage, and increase stakeholder trust and confidence. Mental health and the importance of connecting with nature for wellbeing is something that everyone should be able to experience, so our approach is mindful of that.

The food theme builds on Dorset REC's past 'multicultural lunches' which brought diverse communities together; food-related events are known, and well-attended by the target audience. It also relates directly to the landscape heritage of the Dorset AONB (habitats, historic sites, and current land management patterns) which is significantly shaped by millennia of food production.

#### National Lottery Heritage Fund

With news that Dorset Food & Drink, Dorset Race Equality Council, Inside Out Dorset, and Activate Performing Arts - made a successful bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). This will enable and ensure our work

can continue to build capacity with groups and venues. Especially as the NLHF allows us to work pan Dorset and many different ways.

We're looking forward to how the commission briefs will interpret and celebrate our relationships with food, food producers and the environment. An example is 'soup and a story' where an artist will co create a meal with a chef/cook - whilst engaging the audience with a narrative that relates to the food, land, and heritage of the AONB.

Through the partnerships will work with farmers, landowners- custodians of accessible sites in the AONB, and creative communicators to interpret the landscape and heritage of those sites to an underserved audience, and co-create a longer-term offers of engagement and access, whilst addressing barriers and building lasting relationships. This is joyful on so many levels.

Phase 1 will be an initial pilot with food-related events on at accessible sites in the Dorset AONB for our audience – for example, a picnic with a guided walk on the farm or in a nature reserve, or a cooking event in a farm kitchen using local products with the producers. Hosts will be trained in EDI prior to events.

Phase 2 will be a week of creative events in September '23 at Wild Woodbury, Dorset Wildlife Trust's rewilding farm as part of the biennial, multi-site festival Inside Out Dorset, run by Activate Performing Arts.

Phase 3 will echo Phase 1 although our hope is that the activity type and content will have been co-created with participants from Phases 1&2 and include the offer of participation in other nature-based activities e.g., tree planting, hedge laying or grassland enhancement.

Watch this space for more as we prepare to undertake an exciting new chapter for Dorset Food & Drink .

## **b. DORSET FINGERPOST PROJECT**

### **Detailed outputs and outcomes:**

- Work to restore Dorset's traditional fingerposts continues, led by Roger Bond (Normtec) and his band of regular volunteers, including Blandford & Dorchester Men's Sheds.
- Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, 40 Fingerposts have been fully restored across the county, 6 are in progress and 12 in the pipeline. Restorations include the reinstatement of three posts at Studland which were removed 15 years ago (Beach Rd and another where local destinations have been prioritised)
- Full refurbishment on Baileys Hill with directions to Historic Monument at Knowlton,
- Full repair and refurbishment at Bull Bridge, Wimborne St Giles, at Sutton Hill, at Witchampton and crossroads at Evershot, Barnston and Throop.
- 11 Fingerposts are currently in the process of being restored, these include Durweston, Holt & Evershot
- Dorset AONB continues to contribute towards the cost of Roger's time and some materials.