



Dorset AONB Partnership  
Hosted by Dorset Council  
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## Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 10.00am, Tues 21<sup>st</sup> November 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

Minutes of the last meeting

Partners' 2-minute updates

1. Delivering the AONB Management Plan (information) highlighting
  - a. Farming in Protected Landscapes
  - b. FLAVOURS
  - c. 2023 Photo Competition
2. AONB Business Plan budget headlines 2023-2024 (decision)
3. AONB Management Plan Review process (decision)
4. National Landscapes Re-branding (information)

APPENDIX 1: further team activity detail

APPENDIX 2: briefing on incoming changes to the 'duty of regard'

### Proposed dates of next meetings:

	Spring	Winter (tbc)
<b>AONB Steering Group</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2024	17 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
<b>AONB Partnership Board</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2024	21 <sup>st</sup> November 2024

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

## Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (Cricket Club Pavilion, Weymouth Avenue, Dorchester)

### Board attendance:

Organisation	Representative	Status	2023-05
Independent chairman	Dr Phil Sterling	Voting member	Present
Council for the Protection of Rural England	Dr Guy Dickinson	Voting member	Present
Country Land and Business Association	Will Bond	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Cllr Peter Bowyer	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Cllr Chris Turner	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Cllr Ray Bryan	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Cllr Piers Brown	Voting member	
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	Apologies
Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society	Jeremy Pope	Voting member	Present
Environment Agency	Keith Calder	Voting member	
Forestry Commission	Roly Boughton	Voting member	Apologies
Historic England	Ross Simmonds	Voting member	
National Farmers' Union	Robert Lasseter	Voting member	
Natural England	Robert Lloyd	Voting member	Apologies
Natural England	Tania Carvisiglia	Voting member	Present
The National Trust	Hannah Jefferson	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Race Equalities Council	Vacant	Voting member	
Jurassic Coast Trust	Lucy Culkin	Attending member	Apologies
Dorset Wildlife Trust	Imogen Davenport	Attending member	Present
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	Mark Burton	Supporting Officer	
National Farmers' Union	Gemma Harvey	Supporting Officer	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Neil Wedge	Supporting Officer	
LAF	Janet Davis	Supporting Officer	Present

**DAONB Team:** Tom Munro (AONB Manager), Sally King (Visitor, Tourism & Access Manager), Steph Aburrow (Stepping into Nature), Richard Brown (Landscape Planning Officer), Caroline Richards (Dorset Food & Drink), Sue Dampney (Culture, Communications & Learning Officer), Rachel Janes (FIPL Officer), Pia Lindstrom (FIPL Support Officer), Kate Townsend (Project Support Officer).

### Welcome, introductions and apologies

Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, in particular Imogen Davenport who will be board representative for Dorset Wildlife Trust, Tania Carvisiglia for Natural England and Pia Lindstrom who has joined the AONB team as the Farming in Protected Landscapes Support Officer.

### 1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held in November 2022 were agreed as a true record.

No matters arising.

## 2. Partners' 90 second updates

- a. GDickinson (CPRE): Reported concern that a battery storage plant application has been submitted in Chickerell and an action group has been set up as a consequence. RBrown: We're aware and engaged in the application.
- b. PBowyer (DAPTC): Some TCs have undertaken footpath reviews. Concern raised over high fire risk esp. Corfe / Studland areas and how LA is dealing with this. Concern in communities over the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the disparity in communities between well off & less well off, leading to fractured communities. PSterling: We can help with visitor management issues, DC campaigns to highlight fire risks have had excellent results.
- c. TCarvisiglia (NE): Extension of Hog Cliff National Nature Reserve completed. Peat Discovery grant work has been completed. All Countryside Stewardship applications have been completed. Wareham Arc project and Landscape Recovery Pilot Scheme both progressing well. The Upper Axe project is in development.
- d. JPope (Dorset Museum): Income from museum has grown, in part. due to weddings & use of Roman Town House. The Askerswell hoard has been secured for the museum, no news on N-Grid finds. TMunro: 5 years of cataloguing the finds to go.
- e. LRake (LEP/KMC): LEP undergoing radical changes and now has a business engagement role, thus may need to rethink role on this board. KMC - higher education / university centre will be offering degree courses from September and looking for businesses and partners to join the centre. LNP – doing good work and welcome partners involvement.
- f. GNicholson (DC) Restructure underway to re-align functions of the team. DAONB included but not affected. A name change from Coast & Green Spaces to Environment is likely. Extra resource in place to get the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) completed and implemented. No ROWIP officer in post at the moment, recruitment likely later in the year. Rename of South West Coast Path to 'English Coast Path – King Charles III National Trail' has occurred. Work on Climate & Ecological emergency actions continues – all DC vehicles & some tools are now electric. Busy with 'Cut & Collect' verge management programme. Successful campaign to stop disposable BBQ sales has seen many large suppliers signed up & BBQs off shelves & recycled. Important to help prevent wildfires. Cllr Andrew Kirby is now the lead member for the natural environment, supporting Cllr Ray Bryan.
- g. CllrTarr: Expressed thanks to Cllr Ray Bryan & DC Rangers for implementation of new cycle route in the Winterbourne Valley, especially important to the students at Thomas Hardy School. N-Grid have felled the last pylon. Archaeological finds will come to Dorset Museum in several years' time. Concern over Whitcombe Stables planning application. Contact Cllr Tarr directly for further information
- h. IDavenport (DWT): DWT are the lead for 3 farm clusters in DAONB, with support from FiPL, many interesting findings. Farmer led work underway in Upper Frome area, in particular the Hook catchment, hoping to extend this further in conjunction with Wessex Water. Brownsea Island lookout and welcome area are being made more accessible. Student trainee programme has seen 30 trainees come through scheme and hope this will continue and encourage more people to take up a career in the sector. The Peat Partnership project has submitted a funding bid to convert feasibility study into action, including several sites in AONB
- i. JDavis (Local Access Forum) concentrating on no use cars and shared routes. Awaiting to comment on ROWIP.
- j. GHarvey (NFU) More clarity out over ELMS and advising farmers on this. Future Farm Resilience Fund is available for further support. Farm to Fork summit was a result of NFU lobbying to improve resilience in food production. Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme now closed for applications, huge uptake in the scheme and gained attention from across the country. New livestock worrying campaign launched with NE. Shareable resources available include [Shaun the Sheep Campaign](#) and [How to keep your dog and livestock safe in the countryside \(countrysideonline.co.uk\)](#). In process of setting up a Farm Tenancy Forum.

### 3. Sue Dampney: AONB equality, diversity and inclusion – Statement of Intent

Link to presentation [here](#)

Inspired by the Glover Review and last years' National Conference of AONBs, which had an EDI focus, the team have taken proactive steps to become more inclusive in our work. We have developed a new EDI statement of intent and identified 5 key steps which we will undertake to steer us both strategically and practically in this area.

These key steps are

- Embed EDI work into our Management Plan, due to be reviewed in 2024, through the inclusion of more diverse voices in its development phase via the Steering Group.
- Reach new and diverse audiences and build new relationships through our project work. We have started to do this with our new projects 'Grace the Space' & 'Flavours'
- Review how we communicate with audiences of all backgrounds, increasing our communication channels, and undertaking a website review to make sure our messaging & imagery is welcoming to all audiences.
- On going team training

Comments:

- a. CllrRTarr: Very interested in this. Bollywood at Beach have been very successful. SDampney: We are linking in with this year's Bollywood event at Studland and through our new project 'Flavours.'
- b. PSterling: How do we define who that audience is? Local people can be harder to reach than visitors. SDampney: Marilyn Croft (NE) has helped us to prioritise. We are targeting young people, older people with long term health disabilities and ethnically diverse groups. We're making time to have conversations with these groups so as to co-create activities together and build relationships.
- c. PSterling: Using our landscape to help improve people's health and wellbeing is also important. CllrRTarr: I agree, in particular through inexpensive methods of access.
- d. SDampney: Do bear in mind joining the steering group for our Management Plan review.
- e. LRake: We are not a very diverse group, worth widening reach.
- f. CllrRTarr: County Hospital a good place to start as a diverse workplace.

### RESOLUTION:

**The Board approves the statement of intent and endorses the actions described.**

### 4. Delivering the AONB Management Plan

TM presented on AONB team delivery report. This report is compiled under a new format. To make it more digestible it has been split up in line with DEFRA priorities, with more detail found in the appendix. Feedback on the new format is welcomed. Team members updated the board additionally:

#### a. Rachel Janes - Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

Rachel shared an example of a Place funded FiPL project. In 2023/23 Magdalen Farm were awarded an £80k grant to help fund residential farm stays to people from diverse backgrounds across the country. 900 people have benefitted in total, some coming from very deprived areas, refugees, victims of trafficking, people suffering with mental health conditions. This equates to £90 per person which is exceptional value. The feedback received was very positive and can be shared upon request.

The FiPL scheme has been extended to 2025, with a further investment of £1million. We understand government ambition is to make it a bespoke part of ELMS.

#### b. Steph Aburrow – Stepping into Nature

Link to presentation [here](#)

The Stepping into Nature project funding has now come to an end. Steph presented the project's achievements, legacy and gave an insight into future plans.

There is an array of resources which will continue to be available from the AONB website (including history walks, audiobooks and Your Seasons of Stories resources). '[Picnic in the Parks](#)' their well-being from home website which is packed with self-led resources to help people to access nature, will remain live.

The project delivered dementia training, opened up networking opportunities amongst professionals, funded a Barrier Research project and supported fun 'Give Nature a Go' activities. Through its Nature, Art and Well-being grant fund, projects to the value of £220k have been completed successfully.

Jules & Steph are currently in the development phase for an exciting new project called Nature Buddies, which aims to partner up a volunteer with a person who could benefit from nature.

#### c. Sally King – Defra Access Projects

Link to presentation [here](#)

The Defra Access Fund was used to fund works to improve pathways around Happy Island, Bridport and in West Bay. These pathways will allow easier accessibility all year round and help reduce traffic.

Sally successfully co-ordinated these works, despite the bad weather and short turnaround time, using local, trusted contractors.

This year we are expecting £120k from the Defra Access Improvement. Let Sally know if you have any access improvement project ideas for her to consider.

#### d. Caroline Richards - Dorset Food & Drink update

Link to presentation [here](#)

Dorset Food & Drink (DF&D) currently have 125 members. Resulting from the pandemic, in 2022, a change in strategy was needed - membership fees were put on hold and the organisation split from the PR/marketing consultancy company commissioned to run the membership and marketing side of the business. With a new flat fee membership rate just launched, members continue to benefit from expertise, networking, and the opportunity to attend 4 key events throughout the year, alongside various markets organised by DF&D. This is an exciting new era, with a streamlined, focused offer to celebrate local products and producers and explore opportunities for a more diverse and inclusive future.

In January 2023 DF&D were awarded a FiPL grant for a new project 'Flavours' which aims to bring people from diverse groups and backgrounds together to enjoy, benefit and experience the AONB, using food as a leveller. This new project is currently in development and work is being done to identify suitable host farms, working alongside Dorset Race Equality Council and Grace the Space, to build trust and understanding with the communities they want to reach out to. This will culminate with a food and drink themed event at [Inside Out Dorset festival](#), Wild Woodbury between 15<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Comments:

a. CllrRTarr: concerns over sewage overflow in Winterbourne Abbas and Martinstown. Met with Wessex Water and considering the use of reed beds as a solution. IRees: There are some examples in Wiltshire. PSterling: It's complicated, there's not a single solution.

b. PSterling: Congratulated the team on the work they have achieved, in particular added value through the various initiatives highlighted in this report.

#### **RESOLUTION:**

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

#### **5. 2022-2023 AONB Partnership accounts**

TM presented the paper.

Comments:

a. LRake: Is this for the period April 2022 – March 2023? Acronyms used might not be recognised by all.

TMunro: yes, it covers that period – and acronyms will be spelled out in the annual review

#### **RESOLUTION:**

**The Board approve the partnership accounts for 2022/2023.**

#### **6. Sue Dampney - National Landscapes Re-branding**

Link to presentation [here](#)

Sue is sitting on the steering group leading the rebrand work taking place across the AONB family to 'National Landscapes.' Nice & Serious (design consultancy) have been working with the National Association on the new branding. Logos for all AONBs are currently in design phase. Financial support from Defra to support the rollout is expected to be announced soon. All AONBs are aiming to make the change at the same time, likely to be winter 2023/spring 2024.

Comments:

a. PBowyer: Can you explain what Glover meant by AONB being 'exclusive.' TMunro: Focus groups reported that AONB name was not very visible or understood amongst the general public, hence the need for a rebrand/relaunch.

b. GDickinson: Will you still have the same level of protection? TMunro: Yes, nothing in law changes - we will remain a Protected landscape.

c. GNicholson: The new name, with strapline is a bit of a mouthful. SDampney: We will predominantly use Dorset National Landscape. GNicholson: Will all AONBs use it? SDampney: Yes, this will be rolled out across the AONB family, it will give us a collective voice, so better to go along with this.

## **7. Any other business**

a. LRake: South West LEPs doing a joint piece of work under the [Great South West](#) banner and I'm chairing the rural food, farming and fisheries group, taking a proposal to government.

b. PBowyer: Is the council leading public discussion on transport, in particular to north/south and east/west of county? CllrRTarr: There's an idea to divert traffic through Yeovil and avoid Golden Cap, potential 20% reduction in traffic. No decisions on this yet, it will come out for discussion in next few years. PBowyer: Is that the same with linking us to the M4? CllrRTarr: I believe so. RBrown: Highways England Strategic study have been in contact with us to notify us about the study area, Dorset coast a key feature in connectivity. CllrRTarr: Implications are that Dorset Council would pay for a road between Dorchester and Lyme Regis so might not be keen on it.

c. TMunro: AONB Management Plan review timeline update – we have been given an extension and may extend to December 2025 to allow for delayed NE guidance to be considered. In any case we will prepare an interim statement and bring it to the next meeting for your decision. In Autumn we will run Annual Forums to help us start drawing up priorities for the plan.





#### a. ISLE OF PURBECK LANDSCAPE RECOVERY

Through the team's lead of the Wild Purbeck Partnership, we were invited to lead a bid to the [second round Landscape Recovery Pilot](#).

Landscape Recovery is one of the elements of the Environmental Land Management Scheme, designed to support transformational land management change at scale. The first round is supporting the Upper Axe and Wareham Arc Landscape Recovery Projects. The object of the pilot is to support the development and design of a long-term (20+ years) funding agreement between one legal body responsible for delivery (on behalf of all participants) and government and private finance backers.

This Isle of Purbeck Landscape Recovery bid covers an area of over 8,000 hectares, broadly covering the coast from Durlston to the army ranges, parts of the vale including Corfe Common and farms to the north of Swanage, parts of the Purbeck Ridge, the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve (NNR) and its surrounds. Within this there are 40 participants including the NNR landowners, 20 tenants farming 3 private estates and the tenanted National Trust estate.

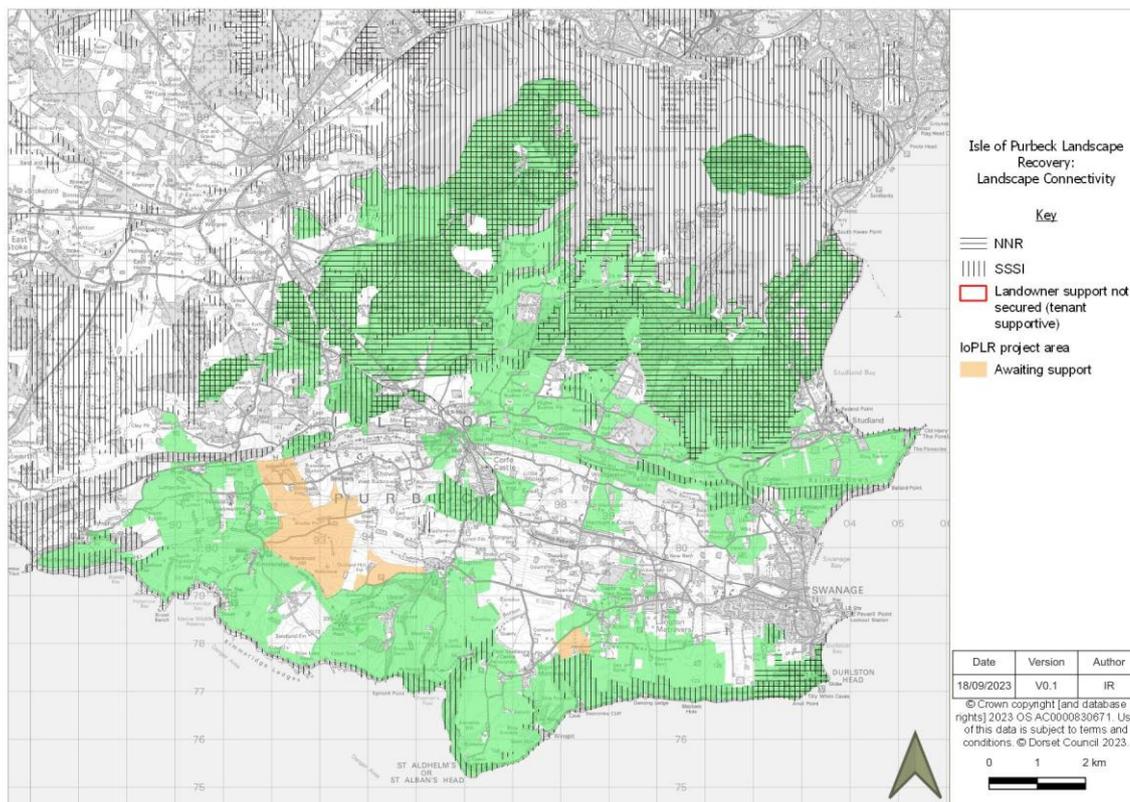
These participants have come together around a common vision for expanded natural habitats, high nature value grasslands and woodlands and areas of regenerative farming where food production remains the priority. If successful, the AONB Partnership will manage a fund of £750k to support a 2-year development phase, including management, support and liaison staff, significant environmental baselining, a regenerative agriculture training programme for farming participants and legal support.

We expect to hear the outcome in the coming few weeks. Even if unsuccessful, the partnership coming together around this common vision is strong and other mechanisms for delivery can be sought.

#### Highlights:

- 40 individuals and organisations came together for the Landscape Recovery Pilot opportunity
- These people share a vision for a high nature value landscape over 8,000 hectares
- A decision on funding is likely to be announced in November

*This project will build on the success of the National Nature Reserve and extend and expand nature-friendly farming across a much wider area, connecting the Purbeck coast, vale, ridge and heaths.*



## 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. Funding has been received from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, Wessex Water, 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 Swan, 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:

- We are establishing a citizen science hub in Bridport to monitor the health of our rivers and plan solutions to tackle any identified problems. As part of this, we have trained 18 citizens in Riverfly monitoring. This is supported by Wessex Water and Bridport Town Council.
- Building on the work undertaken last year, we are looking at opportunities to improve the state of the Brit, Simene, Mangerton, Asker, Char and Winniford through the use of natural processes. This work is supported by Farming in Protected Landscape and the Environment Agency.
- We submitted a funding bid to install Natural Flood Management measures throughout the River Brit system, to help manage flood risk and reduce management burden on existing flood risk management infrastructure. This in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust and West Dorset Wilding.
- Completed 12km of Himalayan balsam pulling on the River Asker, our

*People we have supported through Riverfly training some time ago are now setting up their own networks to support those we have recently trained, and convening meetings to share results and plan action.*

[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 have completed delivery, with one – Linking Chalk, River & Vale – underway. 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.

#### Linking Chalk River & Vale - delivery completed to date:

- 2 pond restorations
- 10ha of grassland restoration
- 655m of hedge laying
- 39 new hedgerow trees
- 1.7ha of scrub clearance

*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 in the future 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.*

## 1.2. 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 total grant funding pot of £2.18 million. 124 projects have been awarded funds (56 live and 68 completed). All £635k of Year 3 (23/24) funding has already been allocated with more than 25%k of the Year 4 (24/25) allocation already determined.

#### Highlights:

- On track for 9 km of new native hedgerow and 3000 trees to be planted during FiPL programme.
- 150m of the river Axe restored so that it connects with the floodplain, preventing flooding downstream, capturing carbon and increasing biodiversity.
- 18.46 ha of species rich grassland sown – 11.4h of which sown with FiPL funded brush-harvester collected seed (FiPL total is 33.68ha).
- Two compost turners are now operational in Dorset with farmers making great use of farmyard manure, sharing equipment and learning – leading to healthier soils and reduced reliance on artificial inputs.

*"Thank you for all your hard work and support throughout phase two of my project, quite simply without your enthusiasm I don't think it would have happened. So please pass on my thanks to all involved and a huge thank you for the grant money" - applicant feedback*

[Dorset AONB FiPL webpage](#), including a series of films and case studies detailing key projects - [The Hogchester Meadows Expansion Project](#) & [Farming, food and education at Middlebere & Turnworth](#)

### b. COMMUNITY TREE PROJECT

Following consultation with parish and town councils, we have developed a project to support communities to plan for and plant trees that will contribute to nature recovery and survive our future climate, as well as being 'the right trees in the right places', appropriately cared for. The project is supported by Dorset Council, co-ordinated by the Dorset AONB Team, and covers the Dorset Council area. There are two main strands: a small grant fund to support the planning of tree planting projects, as well as community planting and engagement activities; and a pilot Volunteer Tree Warden scheme offering training and support for those parish and town councils who wish to participate. We are also working with Public Health Dorset to engage with five schools in West Dorset, raising the profile of trees and the benefits they bring with largely Reception/Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

#### Highlights:

- Delivered a DAPTC Working Together webinar to present the project offer to parish and town councils.
- Supported delivery of 4 school ‘welly walks’ to date, with one more to follow in spring, and a tree planting day later in the winter for all the Early Years Foundation children who have participated. Bespoke curriculum linked learning resources for each school have also been developed.

*We’ll continue working with communities to roll out the training and support offer, as well as completing delivery of the West Dorset schools project.*

### c. LOW CARBON DORSET

Originally, 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. With funding from the Shared Prosperity Funding, the programme is continuing until March 2025.

The programme offers free technical support and grant funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to businesses, public-sector and community organisations across Dorset Council area.

Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) sit on the grant decision panel.

#### Highlights:

Over the lifetime of the original 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 CO2e
- 12.78MW of renewable energy capacity installed

Further metrics will become available as the new strand starts to deliver, having only reopened in August 2023.

*This has been a great project, radically improving the efficiency of our building... It couldn’t have happened without the Low Carbon Dorset programme which provided the catalyst and expert advice.*

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

## 1.3. 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 to enjoy nature. The National Lottery Community funding has now ended and project closed, so the Stepping into Nature 'project' has transitioned into a 'team' exploring ways to build on this learning and enable more people to access and enjoy nature.

### Highlights:

- Released 6 new locations of 'Walk Dorset's History' guides which are available in print and online.
- Released 10 new short films showing different places across Dorset to help people know what expect when visiting new places or create a connection to the paces from home.
- Secured £10,000 from Natural England to support the coordination of a steering group to support the development of a Nature Buddies Network in Dorset which we hope to deliver in 2024, pending a successful funding application. Nature Buddies will be volunteers embedded into existing organisations who will provide personalised support to help overcome barriers to help people connect with nature.
- Secured £101,286 from Farming in Protected Landscapes to help adults with disabilities explore and understand the farming environment in Dorset. It will train and support farmers to safely run farm events, opening the countryside to a wider range of people. This will run until March 2025.
- 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. A report around the barriers people living with long term health conditions is due to be published soon.

*"It is great to be creating new relationships through these projects and we hope this will lead to many more exciting projects moving forward that will support more people to reap the benefits of enjoying nature."*

[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).

With several access and interpretation projects having concluded in March 2023, the last six months have been about securing funding and project planning for the next phase of improvements.

#### Highlights:

- Funding secured for Lyme Regis safety information improvements- 5 new replacement panels
- Successful funding bid for panel replacement along Budleigh Salterton sea front
- Interpretation Plan for much needed signage improvements produced for Charmouth Parish Council
- Successfully applied for underspend from Defra Access for All funding for brand new multi-user route in Chideock which will enhance safety and markedly improve access for all

Full details in Appendix

*“Looking forward to working together with partners to turn preparatory planning work into new accessible routes and further improving signage and interpretation along the coast, including decluttering wherever possible.” Sally, Visitor Tourism and Access Manager*

#### 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.

The findings of the youth-led survey done in 2022 provided the evidence for a second FiPL grant award, to explore one of the priorities highlighted in the survey – the need for events focussed specifically at 11-18 year olds. Over the coming year, we will connect up with 5 youth groups to support them to create pilot age-appropriate events in their area. The first youth group was the Weymouth-based Curtain Raisers drama group, who developed their first outdoor performance at Culliford Tree Barrow (which unfortunately was cancelled due to bad weather).

#### Highlights:

- Over 40 young people engaged in the outdoor drama performance.
- New partnership with Public Health Dorset, enabling us to provide tree focussed curriculum activities for Reception aged children in West Dorset.

*“We’re delighted to see that the survey has also kickstarted new conversations between organisations and landowners in Dorset. A long-term Vision has been developed in Purbeck, led by the National Trust, to help define opportunities for young people to explore and enjoy the landscape.” Sue Dampney, Dorset AONB Culture, Community & Learning Officer*

#### 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 2023/24 we are supporting 8 different projects to the value of £13,400.

#### Highlights:

- 4 projects specifically aimed at engaging young people in the AONB
- 2 heritage & culture projects
- 1 access project and 1 local food sustainability project

*'SDF support has helped to make our branch a thriving, skilled group that can undertake important and challenging tasks that will enhance the landscape for years to come.'* SDF grant recipient

A selection of case studies of several previous projects supported by the SDF fund [here](#)

#### **e. FLAVOURS: A taste of Dorset's outstanding landscape**

The FLAVOURS project offers new opportunities for people to get a taste of Dorset's outstanding landscape. Food will be the focus for a season of taster activities aimed at inviting ethnically diverse communities to explore the landscape around them for the first time.

The vital ingredient for this project is an enthusiastic partnership between the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, Dorset Race Equality Council, Dorset Food & Drink and Activate Performing Arts, with support from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

#### **Highlights**

- A series of taster events on farms got underway in September, kicking off the conversations and explorations over the summer & autumn 2023, with over 120 people from diverse ethnic communities attended 4 farm events.
- The Inside Out Dorset Festival in September created the space for more food and landscape explorations at Wild Woodbury near Bere Regis, with the Soup and Story commissions amongst the diverse range of artists.
- The diverse FLAVOURS Steering Group has started work on co-creating a delicious mix of food and landscape activities with community groups through the seasons of 2024.

*"Nourishment of soul. It has given me more of an appreciation for nature farms and organic."*

*"That pushing out of my comfort zone and talking to people can help me feel/be more confident, happy."*

Participants on the first FLAVOURS farm visit

#### **f. 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.

The Take a Dorset View Photo Competition has been central to our communications since it launched in April 2023, with support from Dorset Magazine and Castle Cameras. Over 700 photos were entered, by 126 photographers, giving the judges a very difficult decision. Winner and Runner Ups in both the Open and Youth categories will be shown at the meeting. These will be showcased in a Take a Dorset View exhibition together with the Highly Commended entries, at Dorset County Hospital (opens April 2024) and Durlston Country Park (autumn 2024).

Social media engagement has increased by 106% across Facebook and 388% across Instagram and a series of campaigns highlighting the special qualities of the AONB have had outstanding reach.

- Increased engagement across all social media platforms: 280 posts published; total followers for Twitter 9661, Facebook 4,900 and Instagram 1982; 6128 engagements (likes, shares, comments) and 503809 impressions (no. of times content viewed).
- New social media campaigns focussed on Seasonal wildlife, Springwatch, FIPL case studies, Beautiful Places to Explore- reels, Event promotion, South Dorset Ridgeway (Hidden in the Hills).

- 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 Take a Dorset View Calendar 2024 is also available with the December issue of Dorset Magazine (out 17 November).

*'I had been on an outing with my family at Brownsea Island when I caught a glimpse of a magical view of a hidden entry way to the most beautiful landscape. I like discovering and photographing hidden sights that people are not usually looking for'. Mia Lyon (age 12), Take a Dorset View Youth Category Runner Up*  
<https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/news/take-a-dorset-view-2023-photo-competition-winners-announced/>

**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)

### 1.4. 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 almost 200 consultations since April 2023, which represents a notable uplift from previous years. The consultations include both planning applications and consultations from organisations such as the Forestry Commission and statutory undertakers. A large majority of the consultations received are from Dorset Council's development management service and the Team are liaising with the planning department to ensure that consultations being issued are those that are most in need of specialist input from the AONB Team.

### Highlights:

- Major solar proposals within and close to the AONB have continued to feature prominently in the casework handled. The Team actively participated in a Public Inquiry into a proposed large solar farm within the AONB (Cruyton Farm, near Maiden Newton) in June and are continuing to see a number of enquiries for developments in the setting, including proposals for battery storage facilities.
- It is expected that an increase in housing applications may be on the horizon, as compensation arrangements for nutrient neutrality appear closer to being resolved.
- The Team continues to receive a notable number of applications for felling and replanting of woodlands affected by Ash Dieback.

## b. DORSET FOOD & DRINK

In March 2023, Dorset Food & Drink embarked on an exciting journey with the FLAVOURS project, inviting ethnically diverse communities and underserved audiences in Dorset to explore and connect to the beauty of our region, using food as the unifier. From FIPL funded taster farm visits, picnics, and shared lunches, to cooking together, helping communities take new business ideas to market – and celebrating the rich tapestry of new food traditions in Dorset – FLAVOURS has got off to a cracking start.

### Dorset Food & Drink core work

Since the parting of ways with Ignyte in 2022, the increased workload and balancing daily tasks, managing events, overseeing website updates, content creation, and more - has become a complex challenge for one person. This multitasking approach is affecting our ability to dedicate sufficient time to focus on crucial strategic aims and outcomes.

In July 2023, we launched a new streamlined membership offer with the aim of enhancing the overall experience for our members. While the initial response has been positive, we recognize that the full value of membership may not be immediately apparent beyond attending DF&D events.

As we navigate these challenges, we are actively working on addressing the clarity of membership value, optimizing internal processes, and reinforcing our commitment to strategic planning. The moment has come to take a long hard look at what Dorset Food & Drink represents now in and in 2024. What it means to members, the wider Dorset public, our current and potential corporate partners. And to explore how we work smarter with Visit Dorset and look at the benefits of aligning more closely with other Dorset Council projects e.g., Dorset AONB, Dorset Coast Forum, Litter Free Dorset.

Do we still want to be a CIC? What are the pros and cons? It often feels like DF&D are poorly misunderstood and undervalued by some members, and on the consumer side of what we do; what does the DF&D brand represent in 2023/4?

Future iterations of Dorset Food & Drink should recognise the achievements of what went before, the brand, and nurture Dorset Food & Drink in the subtext of how and what we do going forward – especially now are we prepare to take Flavours into 2024.

Events in 2023 brought their own challenges, especially with unusual and unpredictable weather patterns, which forced us to postpone and reschedule our biggest event of the year- the Dorset Food & Arts Festival.

The events year concludes with the Dorset Food & Drink Christmas Fair at Athelhampton over the weekend of the 25 & 26 November- but the pitch fees have been a tough sell!

As we look ahead to 2024, we're excited about events like Abbotsbury Food Fair and the Food & Craft Fair at Abbotsbury Swannery, which are easy to organise and require minimum input or financial resources from Dorset Food & Drink, but still offer quality venues.

**Highlights:**

- Embarking on the Flavours Project with FIPL, Dorset Race Equality Council, DAONB and Activate Performing Arts.
- Taking part in the Inside Out Festival activities at Wild Woodbury, Bere Regis with FLAVOURS participants from the Ukranian Community in BCP.

**c. ART IN THE LANDSCAPE**

The AONB team have continued to support the National Association for AONBs with their Art in the Landscape initiative and have recently heard that the funding bid to Arts Council England for a national-scale creative project 'Nature Calling' has been 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, with development work phase in 2024 and creative activity in 2025. The funding will also support a new Arts Development Officer for the AONB family, to support professional development and further fundraising.

Through the FLAVOURS project, we were able to support Activate Performing Arts to run the Inside Out Festival activities at Wild Woodbury, Bere Regis. A full report on attendance will be available soon. The Dorset AONB team pitched the Talking Tent throughout the festival, with a focus on what makes autumn so special.

**Highlights:**

- Dorchester rapper Isaiah Dreads led outreach work with schools and youth groups focussed on the nature of Wild Woodbury site.
- Over 2021 visits were recorded at the various artist performances at Wild Woodbury, despite very bad weather conditions.
- A celebration video of the Inside Out Festival across all the venues [can be found here](#)

*“Gathered conkers shine  
Family connect, celebrate  
Home created nourished love”  
Autumn, created by a visitor to the Talking Tent*

**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:**

- So far, 16 fingerposts have been completed this financial year including Greenhill, Dark Lane - Fifehead Neville, Stoney Cross – Bourton, Holt and 3 new fingerposts at Silverlake.
- 6 are currently underway and 2 in the pipeline.



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

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

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

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

- b. SDF: The SDF was established as a Ministerial initiative and has political support. Defra believes the previous success of SDF will ensure its continuation in a meaningful way without the need to impose minimum levels of spending, which would go against the ethos of an interdependent and trusting relationship with AONB Partnerships. Individual SDF initiatives will be identified as part of an AONB’s programme of work. SDF will remain as a visible funding stream in the AONB family and should continue to be recorded and good practice registered to inform Defra and key partners. There are opportunities to use SDF to add value by encouraging greater uptake of innovative, often community-based, projects. The SDF programme has associated guidance prepared by Natural England which steers the kinds of projects to be developed. This guidance was revised in 2009 to place greater emphasis on encouraging innovation and risk-taking, as well as meeting AONB Management Plan objectives. These risk and innovation elements help clarify the distinction between SDF and other funding streams. Innovative SDF projects should be assessed from local, regional and national perspectives. We make SDF available to projects through a competitive process.
- c. PROJECTS: AONB Partnerships are free to determine how they use resources to deliver projects. If 100% AONB project funding is the only way to achieve the desired outcome, this is for the Partnerships to decide in developing their programme. Defra believes that delivery of AONB Management Plan objectives is generally greater and more sustainable if undertaken in partnership, particularly for large scale or landscape scale projects. It therefore encourages all AONB Partnerships to use their project funding to help lever in additional resources. The ability and willingness of partners to contribute to projects will be variable from partner to partner and from year to year. It is recognised that staffing costs can be met by project funding.

#### 2.4. INCOME FORECAST

The Dorset AONB’s Local Authority contribution is expected to be maintained. The team also has an external fundraising target.

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

	Source	£
LA & Treasury income	Defra TOTAL	£ 283,705
	Dorset Council	£ 56,300
	Other income / reserve	£ 22,000
	TOTAL non-Defra income	£ 78,300
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 362,005</b>

#### 2.5. CORE COSTS

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

Maximum core costs are 4 times the non-Defra income; our projected costs require the income target of £22,000 as outlined above.



- d. Lord Benyon wrote to AONB lead officers in August 2022 enabling a delay to the review process, but recommending adoption of a simple plan to cover the interim period. In May 2023 the Dorset AONB Partnership approved delaying the full review of the management plan in order to ensure that the new plan follows new guidance.

### 3.2. **Process**

- a. Management Plan review is an opportunity to engage a wide range of partners and members of the community in protected landscape matters. Wide engagement also enhances the robustness of the plan.
- b. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be undertaken alongside plan development.
- c. In line with previous reviews, a review steering group of partners will be established to oversee and advise on delivery; this group will include the AONB Chairman to represent the views of the whole partnership.
- d. Jan-Mar 2024: members of the team will consult with experts in relevant fields to understand:
  - o What is working well in the 2014-2019 plan?
  - o What's not working so well?
  - o What has changed in terms of context (opportunities, threats)?
  - o What needs to change to respond to the new context?
- e. Summer 2024: initial public consultation will be focussed around summer events, being light-tough and potentially issue-specific. The Talking Tent has been identified as a good vehicle for holding conversations which would enrich the plan review process.
- f. Autumn 2024: plan drafting
- g. Winter 2024-5: completion of final draft
- h. Early 2025: full formal consultation period

### 3.3. **Draft Statement of Stakeholder Engagement**

#### 1. **The Dorset AONB Management Plan Review**

- The Dorset AONB Partnership is undertaking a formal review of the statutory Dorset AONB Management Plan. Once adopted by local authorities, this Plan sets out the policies and priority actions for the Dorset AONB from 2015 - 2029. It is essential that local and individual perspectives are considered and incorporated into the Management Plan and that people living and working in the AONB have a real opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. We believe that getting a diverse range of views will make the final Management Plan a stronger, more relevant document and is a real opportunity to raise awareness and foster engagement in the implementation.

#### 2. **Stage 1: Reviewing the current Dorset AONB Management Plan**

- The starting point for developing the new Management Plan is to review the existing plan, using the knowledge of key stakeholders. Expert review groups will be held January – March 2024 for each of the management plan chapters, either through one-off meetings or views sought by email, enabling organisations with specialist interest and knowledge to help shape these chapters. A list of those involved in the stage is listed at the end of this document.
- Additional meetings will be held to target key stakeholders who aren't included in the above e.g. business community and young people.

#### 3. **Stage 2: Drafting the new Management Plan**

- Dorset AONB Team members will draft the new Management Plan based on material gathered in Stage 1 as well as the SEA and the EqIA.
- Dorset AONB Partnership Board and Steering Group will have the opportunity to shape the Plan and a special Partnership Board meeting will be convened in September to focus on the draft Management Plan.
- Elected members will be given the chance to input before public consultation begins.

#### 4. Stage 3: Formal Consultation period

The formal consultation period of 12 weeks (October-December) is the opportunity to gather views from a wide range of people who live and work in the Dorset AONB. Input at this stage will be formally acknowledged and considered.

##### Available to all

The draft Management Plan will be freely available in both print and electronic format to anyone who wants to read it. Electronic copies (PDFs of each section) will be available on the Dorset AONB website. Print copies will be available in libraries and council offices and both print and electronic versions will be available on request to the Dorset AONB office. We will also make the draft Management Plan available in other languages and formats on request.

##### Targeted distribution

We have identified specific stakeholders – both individuals and organisations – who we want to receive the draft Management Plan directly from us. These are:

Partnership Board members	Email letter with webpage link (print copies available on request)
All statutory consultees	Email letter with webpage link
Local Authority elected members	Email letter with webpage link via Committee Secretaries Print version in members' room
Local Authority Heads of Dept and specialist officers	Email letter with webpage link
Special interest / Dorset AONB wide organisations	Email letter to highlight possible interest and action and webpage link E-News alert with webpage link
Parish & Town Councils	Email letter with webpage link Alert and article in D&PTC e-newsletter
Local community planning groups	Email alert to those we have worked with over AONB issues and inclusion in DCA news
Wider public	E-news and follow up alert to our database of 6000 local people and visitors Articles to local and county wide media. Social media to highlight key issues Promotion at events
Specific audiences	Targeted promotion may be used for specific issues if opportunities arise

##### Open door policy

We would like to talk with people who have significant concerns or ideas about material within the draft Management Plan during the consultation period, so that written responses are as considered and informed as possible. We will invite people to contact the Dorset AONB Team anytime during the consultation period and make an arrangement to meet if required.

#### 5. Stage 4: Consultation responses and finalising the Management Plan

The consultation period ends at a date to be agreed in December 2024 and all responses must be emailed or sent to the Dorset AONB Team. When reviewing the responses from the formal consultation period all respondents will be treated equally, weight given to comments to reflect the relevance to the management plan and the statutory purposes of the AONB designation. All comments will be considered in the context of the national AONB Management Plan guidance and the statutory purposes of the AONB designation.



- Supported Askers Meadow Nature Reserve with school visits from Mountjoy, Beaminster, and Sustainable Bridport with events at Bridport Primary School.
- Participated in Charmouth Dragon Festival
- Led guided walks with the Upper Char Community Group

#### 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 (10m)

#### 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

### e. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

#### Detailed outputs and outcomes in 2023/24:

46 more farmers have benefitted from the programme since April 2023 making the cumulative total for FiPL programme 167. Six farm groups or clusters have been supported.

Outputs relating to the four themes include:

#### Nature

- 926m of hedgerow will be laid this winter, which will take the total to end of Year 4 FiPL to just under 2.5km managed in this way.
- 6 ponds restored in total
- 701 native or orchard trees to be planted in winter 23/24.
- 11.40 ha of wildflower rich grassland created in 2023 season.

#### Climate

- 184 m of new native hedgerow will be planted in winter 23/24, with a further 1204m agreed for 24/25 - this brings total that FiPL will plant over 4 years to 8886m
- Borehole to be installed to enable grazing of SSSI
- An investment in a second compost turner has been made, and associated demonstration and training events.
- Second season of innovative hemp growing trial delivered including research into oil processing

#### People

- 11 projects have been supported which include elements to widen participation in the Protected Landscape including outreach to disadvantaged school children via the Kingfisher Awards Scheme, working with Dorset Race Equality Council & Dorset Food and Drink, plus the residential stays offered at Madgalen Farm for groups including disadvantaged children, young carers, refugees, and children who have been trafficked into the UK. Links have been made with social prescribers at two projects. Practical conservation volunteering features in four projects.
- 68 individual educational farm visits will be delivered this year.

#### Place

- A geophysical survey of the Waddon Hill Roman Fort and a re-examination of Webster's finds has been funded. The landowner here is working closely with Bournemouth University, Bridport and Dorset County Museums.

### f. 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.

## g. **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 CO2e (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**

### h. **STEPPING INTO NATURE**

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

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

## i. VISITOR MANAGEMENT

### Detailed outputs and outcomes:

#### Interpretation and signage

- Funding secured for Lyme Regis safety information improvements from Dorset Council and Lyme Regis Town Council. This work can progress now the *Dogs on beaches Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)* has been agreed (Nov 2023), with five replacement signs planned
- Successful funding bid to the Geologist's Association Curry Fund, matched by Devon County Council, for a panel replacement along Budleigh Salterton sea front
- Interpretation Plan produced for Charmouth Parish Council and preparatory work for much needed improvements under way. Awaiting funding confirmation and likely to be part of a larger coastal transition project

#### Access for All (A4A) project

- £53,000 underspend from Defra Access for All 2022/23 funding secured for creation of a brand new multi-user route from Chideock, heading east to Quarry Hill. This will markedly improve non car access along this stretch by offering an alternative to walking, cycling, horse riding and mobility scooters along the A35
- £121,000 A4A funds allocated to Dorset AONB 2024/25
- Preparation work well under way to improving access in the Piddle Valley with 2023/24 funds
- Work to agree additional 2023/24 projects underway

## j. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

### Detailed outputs and outcomes:

13 applications with a total request of £20,000 were considered by the SDF Panel in May 2023. The panel were keen particularly keep to support projects which encourage young people's involvement in the AONB. In the end £13,400 of grant funding has been allocated to support the following 8 projects:

- **Planet Purbeck Festival** (Sept 2023): 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](#)
- **Asker Meadows Nature Reserve Project:** Pupils from Mountjoy School with complex needs volunteering at Asker Meadow Nature Reserve. Facilitated poetry and visual art sessions will enable them to share their feelings about being in nature. The grant is a contribution towards the artists' costs. Further information [here](#)
- **Bridport Youth Dance:** Young dancers' site-specific outdoor performance 'Choreography Geography 2' at Abbotsbury Hillfort, building on the success of last year's production. Creation of a new film based on the performance that will take dance and art into local primary schools, care homes and local Parkinson's support groups. More information [here](#)
- **Purbeck Youth & Community Foundation:** Costs towards Club Planet Purbeck Environmental Youth Group. Funding for a Project Manager to work with the group, co-ordinate and promote a minimum of 4 visits/activities connected to nature and environmental issues around the AONB. More information [here](#)
- **Artsreach – Stone, Sea & Song:** Commission of a song celebrating the heritage of stone quarrying, to be sung by a local choir, filmed and waymarked QR code for walkers.
- **Caught in the Net:** Costs towards R&D stage of a co-created participatory performance which will lead to a tourable show and engage the community with the heritage of Chesil Beach. Inspired by memories, stories and oral histories gathered by writer, Sarah Acton, for her book 'Seining Along Chesil.' More information [here](#)

