



# Dorset

Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty

Dorset AONB Partnership  
Hosted by Dorset Council  
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## Dorset AONB Partnership Board Meeting, Thurs. 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022

### At County Hall, Dorchester

### Draft minutes

Organisation	Representative	Status	2022-05
Independent chairman	Dr Phil Sterling	Voting member	Present
Council for the Protection of Rural England	Dr Guy Dickinson	Voting member	Present
Country Land and Business Association	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	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	Apologies
Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership	Luke Rake	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society	Jeremy Pope	Voting member	Present
Environment Agency	Keith Calder	Voting member	Apologies
Forestry Commission	Roly Boughton	Voting member	Apologies
Historic England	Ross Simmonds	Voting member	
National Farmers' Union	Robert Lasseter	Voting member	
Natural England	Robert Lloyd	Voting member	Present
The National Trust	Hannah Jefferson	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Race Equalities Council	Nathalie Sherring	Voting member	Present
Jurassic Coast Trust	Lucy Culkin	Attending member	Present
Purbeck Heritage Network	Brian Bleese	Attending member	
Dorset Council	Giles Nicholson	Supporting Officer	Present
Dorset Council	Hilary Jordan	Supporting Officer	
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Maria Clarke	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Country Land and Business Association	Elliot Hutt	Supporting Officer	Apologies
National Farmers' Union	Gemma Harvey	Supporting Officer	Present
LAF	Janet Davis	Supporting Officer	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Neil Wedge	Supporting Officer	

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

**Guests:** Wendy Carmichael (Dorset Council), Tom Clarke (National Trust), Tara Hansford (Dorset Council), Grace Herve (Dorset Wildlife Trust)

### Welcome, introductions and apologies

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

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

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

## 2. Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action

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

Comments:

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

### RESOLUTION:

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

## 3. Delivering the AONB Management Plan

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

### Jill Hearing – Greening West Dorset’s Hill & Vales

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

- 6ha lowland meadow restored using plants and seed of local provenance on 2 farms
- Over 800m of hedgerow laid and restored
- 1763m new hedgerow planted
- 70 hedgerow oaks planted (against target of 24)
- 36 orchard trees planted, including on former orchard sites
- 11 ponds restored, including some with potential for creating habitat for great crested newts
- Invasive non-native species controlled on 1 pond (Parrot’s feather) and 12km riverbank (Himalayan balsam)
- 600m of River Asker and River Char restored (against target of 250m) and tree canopy opened up
- Natural flood management interventions undertaken at 5 locations in River Asker and River Char headwaters
- Access improvements completed at Kingcombe National Nature Reserve, including new signs and interpretation boards, restored boardwalk, bridge & benches
- Engaged over 300 people in producing litter and river action plans
- 10 SNCIs surveyed and management statements produced

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

### Tom Munro – Purbeck Heaths Wilder Grazing Unit Project

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

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

### **Rachel Janes – Farming in Protected Landscapes**

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

Comments:

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

### **RESOLUTION:**

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

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

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

WC explained how the DC Climate & Emergency Strategy (which aims to achieve a carbon neutral Council by 2040, and County by 2050) is performing. There are 41 objectives covering 9 areas, of which many actions are underway. The pandemic made a positive difference within DC, in particular in relation to building emissions and travel. Other areas in which carbon emissions are reducing include highways, streetlights and green spaces. However internally there have been some governance issues, a lack of budget and resources and a lack of baseline data. To address this a new Corporate Director has been appointed, coupled with a new capital works fund and internal governance system meaning the team will be refocusing their actions & objectives by using a new 'road map' to focus on delivering targets. In particular the team will be focusing on the Ecological Emergency. The team want to link in with experts and develop new partnerships, thus WC encouraged board members to link in with her team and to [email](#) her.

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

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

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

forged some strong relationships, including with the Ministry of Justice. There has been a culture shift within Purbeck, a feeling that they can set their sights high and achieve their ambitions.

Comments:

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

## 6. 2020-2021 AONB Partnership Accounts

TM presented the paper.

### RESOLUTION:

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

## 7. Landscapes Review Consultation

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

Comments: -

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

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

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

TM: I believe this is an issue close to Lord Benyon's heart as well

CTurner: A solution is to shoot the dog, do you know of any examples

TMunro: Hard to catch it in action but it is a legal solution

WBond: Shooting a dog is not done lightly! It's a drastic solution

PBowyer: Under provisions for Local Plan there will be 8000 new dogs in the County, the problem will not go away

TMunro: Added to this are the Climate implications of 8000 more mouths to feed

SKing: And associated plastic bags

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

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

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

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

Comments:

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

## RESOLUTION:

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

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

Link to [PowerPoint here](#)

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

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

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

### 10. Partners' 90 second updates

- a. JDavis (Local Access Forum): assisting DC with ROW improvement plan, advising them on shared use routes and access islands. Happy to offer advice on RoW issues so please contact us.
- b. NSherring (DREC): hectic couple of years and capacity of team has not grown to absorb this. Working with NT on inclusivity training, and have a training session with AONB Team on June 29<sup>th</sup>. Interested in discussing how to increase the capacity of the team to cope with the demands, in part. around loneliness post Covid, and developing partnership projects around this.

- c. LCulkin (JCT): 12 month review of P-ship plan will be live at the end of the week. New digital platform signed off, new fossil collection code. Relocation of office to DWT Brooklands. A series of 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events are being planned.
- d. JPope (DNHAS): At Dorset Museum the Natural Gallery is proving very popular. A new Hardy's Wessex exhibition is opening soon in the People's Gallery.
- e. WBond (CLA / DLNP): land managers have become more environmentally aware but will this continue with predicted shortages of food? Those that have resisted the movement will be saying how will we do it? A dilemma is therefore playing out, and we cannot deny the problem.
- f. GHarvey (NFU): Challenging times for farmers, against subsidy reductions this year and high input costs which has impacted farmers' business viability and confidence. Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot has had a mixed take up, with increased capital costs some Farmers reluctant to take risks. Farmers looking at efficiencies and diversification of businesses. Resilience essential.
- g. GNicholson (DC): Exciting times – C'side team are at the heart of DC environmental work now in terms of Climate Emergency and Corporate Plan.
- h. GDickinson (CPRE): Campaigning hard on the Local Plan, want fewer houses but enough affordable and social housing for local people, built to environmental standards. More action on Climate & Ecological Emergency. Hoping the AONB team will review smaller planning applications and consider additional financial support towards the cost of fingerpost repairs.
- i. PBowyer (DAPTC): Parishes want safer rural roads, lower speed limits and feel byways incorporated into roadways very dangerous. Concerns around draft proposals of 'Levelling Up' paper which could remove local planning powers and remaining secrecy around the Local Plan consultation which took place a year ago and as yet no analysis published by DC. PC's would like more measures to ban portable BBQs such as Public Space Protection Orders, with some PCs considering their own bylaws under the Localism Act. AONB highly valued and would like to see more action taken against ecological decline of species & damage to habitats.
- j. RLloyd (NE) budgets looking good, facing staffing challenges & so recruiting, lots of C'side Stewardship applications in, our statutory work continues, in particular nutrient work continuing around Poole Harbour & The Chesil. Ian Alexander has moved within NE to lead on Nature Recovery Strategies. Looking at Nature Recovery Networks across Dorset, including with DAONB.
- k. CTurner (DAPTC) Are the Dorset Coast Forum associated to us. TM it's a sister organisation, annual meeting date for the Coast Forum is 20<sup>th</sup> September.

## DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Dates of next meetings

	Winter	Spring (tbc)
<b>AONB Steering Group</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	25 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
<b>AONB Partnership Board</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2022	25 <sup>th</sup> May 2023

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