



## Dorset National Landscape

Dorset National Landscape is home to some of the most diverse landscapes in Britain. Stretching along one of Britain's finest coastlines – the Jurassic Coast - and taking in countryside which still evokes the settings of the Hardy novels, this is a precious place for both people and wildlife.

With such a variety of landscapes, comes an outstanding range of habitats. Dorset National Landscape is often considered as the 'wildlife capital of England' – with 83% of all British mammal species, 48% of bird species and 70% of butterfly species present. There are patches of landscape that are home to the most variety of plants and mammals in the UK, and the relatively warm climate also offers a home to species new to the UK. The unique geology here gives rise to habitats that exist incredibly close to each other, which is why species such as sand lizard, overwintering birds, dolphins and red squirrels are neighbours – only in Dorset.

Dorset National Landscape is also a living textbook of history. You can take a coastal trip through 185 million years of history and three geological time periods. Inland there are land-stories crossing 8000 years of human habitation, from Bronze Age to Roman times to contemporary industries. The ridge of high ground between Dorchester and Weymouth – the [South Dorset Ridgeway](#) - is a particularly rich historic landscape. This ancient land boasts over 1000 round barrows as well as stone circles, henges and the largest Iron Age hill fort in northern Europe.

This area has long been a deep wellspring of inspiration. From Dorset natives such as Thomas Hardy to residents like John Fowles, plus visiting artists including Paul Nash, Turner and Constable. Today the creative well is deeper than ever with an extensive community of both professional and amateur artists. Read more about the [special qualities](#) of the Dorset National Landscape.

Dorset National Landscape team works to conserve and enhance this uniquely varied landscape. We act as a natural health service for promoting outdoor health and wellbeing and enable nature to recover while balancing different priorities. Our projects help people connect to nature in all sorts of different ways and [working with artists and arts organisations](#) for over 15 years has been key to our success at this. Our landscapes are a precious resource that everyone should be able to enjoy. Today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Dorset is the fifth largest National Landscape in the UK, see the boundary and more information at [www.dorset-nl.org.uk](http://www.dorset-nl.org.uk)



## Nature Calling

The Dorset National Landscape partnership is committed to connecting more with underserved communities and has a number of projects including [Stepping into Nature](#) (working with people with long term health issues) and [FLAVOURS](#) project (reaching out to ethnic minority communities). We see Nature Calling as another important project to help us further widen our audience in terms of people we engage with and in turn the variety of people who have the confidence and ability to visit the countryside. Through Nature Calling we would like to connect with underserved communities in South Somerset (on the northern edge of the National Landscape) as a priority target area.

We are currently working with arts and countryside organisations in South Somerset to identify communities where we can support and build on existing arts / environmental engagement activity, largely around the Yeovil area. The Advisory Group for Nature Calling in Dorset has yet to be formed but initial discussions have met with good enthusiasm, and we hope that we can identify key partners and hold the first meeting by mid April 2024.

Once we have agreed which geographical area and communities to work with, we can identify transport links and suitable sites to visit with the Dorset National Landscape. We have already scoped these, together with possible relevant themes. The Bristol – Weymouth train line connects Yeovil with a several stations in the Dorset National Landscape, with access to ancient landscapes, river valleys and chalk downland along the way. These are all possible themes that could be picked up by Nature Calling, each has good potential for narrative that can connect the National Landscape with the landscape and heritage of Yeovil. However, we feel it is important that the Advisory Group makes the final decision on these so that they reflect local interest and need.

We will be working with [Activate Performing Arts](#), who will be taking on the role of Lead Producer. We have been working with Activate on art in the landscape projects for over 10 years, including collaborations through the biennial [Inside Out Dorset](#) festival.



Lowland heathland contributes to the unique biodiversity of Dorset National Landscape © Nigel Stride



St Catherine's Chapel, part of the ancient landscape of the South Dorset Ridgeway © Graham Herbert



Hell Stone ancient barrow on the South Dorset Ridgeway (c) Paul Haynes



Extensive ramparts of Maiden Castle Iron Age hillfort on the South Dorset Ridgeway (c) Tony Gill



Extensive Akademi at Inside Out Dorset, Activate, © Jayne Jackson