



Dorset National Landscape

Dorset National Landscape Partnership
Hosted by Dorset Council
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Minutes of the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board Meeting, Thursday 22nd May (Cricket Club Pavilion, Weymouth Avenue, Dorchester) **Draft Minutes**

Organisation	Representative	Status	2024-011
Council for the Protection of Rural England	Dr Guy Dickinson	Voting member	Apologies
Country Land and Business Association	Will Bond	Voting member	Present
Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils	Cllr Chris Turner	Voting member	Present
Dorset Council	Cllr Nick Ireland	Voting member	Present
Dorset Council	Cllr Ben Wilson	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Cllr Jane Somper	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Council	Giles Nicholson	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Maria Clarke	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society	Claire Dixon	Voting member	Present
Dorset Race Equalities Council	Jonathan Burke	Voting member	Apologies
Dorset Wildlife Trust	Imogen Davenport	Voting member	Present
Forestry Commission	Roly Boughton	Voting member	Apologies
Historic England	Sasha Chapman	Voting member	Present (online)
Independent chairman	Dr Phil Sterling	Voting member	Present
National Farmers' Union	Tim Gelfs	Voting member	Apologies
National Farmers' Union	Gemma Harvey	Supporting Officer	Apologies
Natural England	Robert Lloyd	Voting member	Apologies
Natural England	Ian Alexander	Voting member	Apologies
The National Trust	Hannah Jefferson	Voting member	Present

Dorset National Landscape Team: Tom Munro (Manager), Sally King (Visitor, Tourism & Access Manager), Julie Hammon (Nature Buddies), Caroline Richards (Project Support Officer), Sue Dampney (Culture, Communications & Learning Officer) Ian Rees (Countryside Officer), Kate Townsend (Nature Buddies), Richard Brown (Planning Officer).

Guests: Tom Clarke and Alexandra Brocklesby from the National Trust Purbeck Estate, who joined via teams.

Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

The Chair also recorded thanks to members of the Dorset National Landscape Team who have left since the last meeting. Pia Lindström, who supported Rachel on the FIPL project for 18 months, has returned to Norway, and recruitment for her replacement is underway.

Caroline Kelly, who managed the Wytch Farm access and landscape enhancement fund, has also left, with thanks expressed for her work.

Jill Hearing has retired after many years of dedicated work with the Dorset National Landscape team, including the landscape partnership and National Grid enhancement projects. The Chair wished her well in retirement and said that Jill would be greatly missed.

The Dorset National Landscape Team currently has several posts in recruitment.

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held in Nov. 2024 were agreed as a true record.

1. Purbeck Together- Climate Action Fund Bid led by the National Trust

The Board received a presentation from Tom Clarke and Alex Brocklesby about "Purbeck Goes Wild," a multi-year initiative aiming to reconnect Purbeck's children and young people with nature by leveraging community assets. Despite Purbeck's natural wealth and outdoor industry, many local children remain disconnected from these resources.

A community vision, developed in June 2023 and launched at the Planet Purbeck Festival with support from 30 organisations including Dorset National Landscapes, seeks to provide all young people with meaningful nature experiences.

Key actions include mapping accessible opportunities, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and developing the Purbeck Goes Wild brand. Schools play a central role as community hubs, supported by resources such as trip packs and newsletters.

The Board acknowledged the challenge of community disconnection from green spaces and emphasised the importance of engaging young people to secure long-term support for nature recovery and a resilient Purbeck. [Link to the presentation here](#)

2. Delivering the National Landscape Management Plan – annual review of team activity:

Tom Munro presented the 24 – 25 Annual Review, with highlight presentations on [Farming in Protected Landscapes \(FIPL\)](#) by Rachel Janes and [Access for All](#) by Sally King.

RESOLUTION: The Board acknowledges significant progress towards delivering the Management Plan.

3. 2024-2025 Provisional Partnership Accounts

TM presented the paper.

DEFRA and Dorset Council core contributions leveraged significant external funding.

£2.86m direct spend delivered, with an estimated total value of £4.75m for partnership projects.

Every £1 of Dorset Council funding generated £83.70 in landscape value.

The Board commended the team and partners for outstanding delivery, partnership working, and effective leveraging of resources.

RESOLUTION: The Board commends the funding leverage demonstrated by these accounts.

4. Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is now out for public consultation, running until July 2025.

The Board emphasised the importance of reviewing and commenting on this key document, which will be among the first nature conservation strategies to gain formal approval from local councils later this year.

The LNRS builds on over a decade of nature recovery mapping and biodiversity action planning, representing an evolution of previous work rather than duplication.

Board members were encouraged to help promote the consultation within their networks to ensure broad engagement. Publicity materials, including videos, have been produced to support this effort. The Board also noted the benefit of operating largely within a single county and LNRS area

5. 2025 – 2026 Defra funding update

The Board received an update on Defra funding which includes a significant increase in capital funding this year, aimed at supporting both "invest to save/earn" projects and the government's 30 by 30 nature recovery ambition.

While revenue funding remains flat, the capital allocation is higher, with tighter criteria focused on impactful, long-term outcomes.

Board Member Comments and Discussion:

- Members generally supported the proposed project areas, emphasising the need for a balanced portfolio of small and large projects and timely allocation to reduce staff pressure.
- There was broad agreement that, while a formal panel process (as with FIPL) is not yet established, recommendations from the that panel are trusted, and already follow an approved process.
- Concerns were raised about transparency and the risk of the fund appearing as a "closed shop" open only to partners. Members suggested that, while initial allocations might focus on partners, any remaining funds should be advertised more widely to ensure new applicants and landowners can benefit.
- The Board agreed on the importance of developing a clear, transparent process for future rounds, including the potential use of mapping data to target priority landowners and projects.
- It was noted that success in delivering this fund could lead to further allocations in future years, so robust processes and equitable distribution are essential.

RESOLUTION: Introduced by Will Bond and unanimously supported, The Board resolved that applications to this fund should be considered by the FIPL panel

6. Management Plan Review

TM presented the paper. The Board considered the emerging vision and public consultation outline for the Management Plan Review. The draft vision has already received feedback from a range of partners, including Historic England, Natural England, Dorset Council, the Local Nature Partnership, Dorset Wildlife Trust, NFU, Forestry Commission, and the Local Access Forum.

Key Points and Board Comments:

- The Board generally supported the emerging vision, with some members noting that the coast could be referenced more strongly, and that access should be highlighted more explicitly.
- There was a suggestion to give woodlands a separate bullet point, recognising their broader value beyond nature, including local products, carbon sequestration, and public access. It was noted that local woodlands are often poorly managed and that this is an opportunity to raise their profile.
- Members discussed whether to specifically name-check designations such as World Heritage Sites and SSSIs. The consensus was to avoid listing specific sites to prevent the appearance of omission, but to ensure heritage and geology are well represented.
- The Board agreed to consider these comments and make amendments before the draft goes out for public consultation.
- The consultation will be hosted online by Dorset Council's consultation team, with both quantitative (0–5 scale) and qualitative (free text) feedback invited. The Board noted that concerns about digital exclusion have lessened since the last review.
- The consultation will overlap slightly with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) consultation, and the communications approach will be coordinated to minimise confusion.
- The team will also promote the consultation at public events and markets in Bridport, Blandford, Corfe Castle, Yeovil, and Dorchester.
- Board members were encouraged to submit actions they would like to lead or see embedded in the plan.

RESOLUTION: The Board approved the emerging vision and the public consultation outline, with amendments to be made reflecting the discussion.

Partners' 2- minute updates

Historic England (Sasha Chapman)

Sasha Chapman outlined her role as Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Historic England in the Southwest, supporting Natural England and the Forestry Commission with standalone capital grants (HE1 and PA2) and described how the national team assists landowners in protecting and enhancing the historic environment, including identifying at-risk barrows and supporting activities such as scrub clearance and geophysics surveys. Sasha highlighted ongoing collaboration with Dorset Wildlife Trust at Liscombe and Wild Woodbury and

encouraged Board members to refer interested landowners to the Countryside Stewardship Heritage Service grant scheme.

If you are interested in applying for the Countryside Stewardship Heritage Service grant to protect and enhance historic and archaeological features, you can find full details and access the application process [here](#).

The CSHS team supports applications to three Countryside Stewardship grants (all stand-alone [Higher Tier Capital](#) grants):

- [PA2 Feasibility Study agreements](#) (only to prepare for a HE1)
- [HE1 Historic and archaeological feature protection capital item](#)
- We can also develop applications for [PA1 Implementation Plans](#) (fixed at £1,200), which are directed to Natural England to sign off.

Dorset Wildlife Trust (Imogen Davenport)

- The new Lookout at Brownsea Island, developed in partnership with the National Trust, has opened as a state-of-the-art wildlife observatory, replacing the old hide. The facility offers panoramic, accessible views of the lagoon and aims to engage more visitors with Brownsea's wildlife, especially birds. Board members welcomed the improved visitor experience and increased accessibility.
- The Peat Project has made significant progress, co-funded by the Wytch Farm Fund, DEFRA, and others.
- The Dorset Wild Rivers and Enclosed Beaver Project has completed its first five-year licence, with applications underway for continuation and possible wild release licences. The Dorset Beaver Management Group continues to address management and mitigation issues.
- Work is ongoing at Liscombe, with a management plan and stewardship application in development.
- Imogen expressed concern about the implications of the National Planning and Infrastructure Bill, particularly the rejection of amendments related to chalk streams.
- Water-related projects are progressing in the Upper Hook and Upper Fruit areas, in partnership with Wessex Water and local farm clusters, though some funding uncertainty remains due to an ongoing appeal.

Board comments: Members praised the Lookout's transformation and its potential to attract and educate a broader range of visitors. They also noted the importance of ongoing collaboration on river and beaver projects and expressed shared concerns about the legislative changes affecting nature recovery.

National Trust (Hannah Jefferson)

- Coastal Adaptation: Projects at High Beach and in Purbeck are underway, focusing on adaptation and retreat strategies, though outcomes will take time to materialise. Work with project managers continues, and future infrastructure provision is being considered. A potential new acquisition is still pending.
- Tourism: The season has started exceptionally well, with visitor numbers higher than expected, bringing a welcome boost to tourism providers after a challenging few years. Museums, however, continue to face difficulties.
- Volunteer-led Walks: A new guided walks programme in West Dorset, led by 20 recruited volunteers, has been very successful, with most walks fully booked and taking place in new locations such as Lyme Regis.
- Nature Buddies & Climate Empowerment: The Trust is integrating the Nature Buddies initiative with the walks programme and continuing climate empowerment sessions with schools, supported by increased funding. These efforts help young people understand their role in local and national climate action.
- Well City Programme: Early discussions are underway to bring the successful NHS Well City programme from Salisbury to Dorset.
- Museums & Collections: The Dorset Museums Association is expected to be reformed, which will strengthen local museum networks and collaboration. There is also a new project in development to pilot a Jurassic Coast Collection, aiming to improve understanding, promotion, and access to local heritage.

Board Comments: Members welcomed the positive tourism trends and the success of the volunteer programme. The integration of climate and wellbeing initiatives was praised, as was the renewed focus on collaboration among Dorset's museums.

Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society (Claire Dixon)

- Claire reported that the Dorset Museums Association, previously defunct, is expected to be reformed, which will help reconnect the network of Dorset museums and strengthen partnership and collaboration.
- A joint project with Jurassic Coast Collections is being developed to secure funding for a pilot that will improve understanding, promotion, and access to the region's heritage.
- The recent "Gladiators" exhibition was a success, resulting in an operational surplus, the first since 2010 although this was due to several one-off factors.
- New partnerships with English Heritage have enabled walks at Maiden Castle and in Roman Dorchester, with new signage welcoming visitors to the historic town. There are plans to extend this signage to car parks and bus stops to enhance the sense of arrival and promote free access to heritage.
- The museum is preparing for a new exhibition, "Jane Austen and the Sea," which will explore themes of well-being and contemporary connections to swimming and the sea. Dorset Museum has achieved LWEP status, providing a direct link to Visit England and enhancing communication and tourism opportunities.
- Claire encouraged board members to contribute articles on natural history and landscape topics to the museum's long-standing, peer-reviewed journal, noting that submissions are currently dominated by archaeology. Board members agreed on the value of the publication as a local scientific archive and its importance for sharing research and projects more widely.

Dorset Council (Cllr Nick Ireland)

Nick Ireland provided an update covering several key areas:

- Jurassic Coast Trust: With the demise of the Trust, there is an opportunity to do things differently and make a positive impact.
- High Angle Battery Project: Highlighted as a successful initiative, with Bridget Betts' team stepping in during her absence.
- Council Structure: Nick is working to better integrate climate, nature, and green space work within the council, aiming for improved collaboration and budgeting across these areas. He noted that climate initiatives often receive more funding and attention than nature and green space.
- Green Space Initiatives: Ongoing work includes glyphosate trials and a push for river charges to support environmental management.
- Nutrient Neutrality & BNG: Nutrient neutrality and biodiversity net gain requirements are impacting planning, particularly for pop-up campsites and new developments. New rules mean that even short-term campsites now need special permission, often requiring costly nutrient credits. Recent hotel development in Dorchester faced significant hurdles due to these requirements but has now received approval.
- Local Plan: The council is preparing for a major consultation on the Local Plan, aiming for much higher public engagement than previously (targeting 50,000 responses). Nick encouraged everyone to participate and promote the consultation.
- Public Health: Nick and board members discussed the importance of integrating public health with nature recovery and access work. Although Public Health Dorset no longer exists in its previous form, there is interest in involving public health representatives in board activities, given the strong links between access to nature and health outcomes. The upcoming NHS 10-year health plan and a shift towards prevention present further opportunities for collaboration.
- Board Comments: Members agreed on the value of integrating public health into landscape work and supported exploring ways to formalise this relationship, recognising the potential for significant health and environmental benefits if prevention is prioritised in future funding, and supporting further collaboration and innovation in these areas.

Local Nature Partnership & Country Land & Business Association (Will Bond)

- LNP Chair Vacancy: The LNP is still seeking a new chair following Luke Rake's departure, and Will encouraged board members to suggest suitable candidates, noting a lack of responses so far.
- Conference: The recent Local Nature Partnership conference was considered successful, focusing on food, farming, and nature-based themes.
- Agriculture and Land Management: Will highlighted ongoing uncertainty in the sector, particularly due to changes in government schemes like SFI, which was withdrawn and then reinstated, creating confusion for farmers. He noted that while the US-UK negotiations could have been worse for Dorset farmers, the overall environment remains challenging.
- Nature Recovery Projects: On a positive note, several local nature recovery projects are in development, including the Whale Ark, with others in the pipeline. These projects are progressing through phased development and, if approved by DEFRA, could secure 30 years of funding and provide long-term certainty for land management in the area.
- Board members acknowledged the challenges of uncertainty and short-term funding in agriculture, agreeing that securing long-term plans and funding would be transformative for the sector. They thanked Will for sharing these insights and emphasised the importance of continued collaboration and information sharing across the industry.
- Will concluded that, while the sector faces significant risks and uncertainty until at least 2026, the potential for large-scale, long-term nature recovery planning is a major opportunity if secured.

Natural England (David Charman)

David updated the Board on several key points:

- Budget Uncertainty and Staffing: Natural England faces significant financial uncertainty, with budget details often arriving late in the financial year. This has led to a planned 10% reduction in headcount—about 300 staff, partly due to short-term funding cycles and changes in leadership. Board members noted the challenges this creates for business planning and staff morale.
- Strategic Direction: Natural England published its new strategic direction in April, outlining priorities for growth, health, and security from 2025 to 2030. The strategy emphasises the need for a step-change in nature recovery, stronger partnerships, and a focus on places where the greatest impact can be achieved. The full strategy will be released later in the year.
- Agri-Environment Schemes: There is ongoing uncertainty over the launch of Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier and SFI schemes, with announcements repeatedly delayed. Farmers and land managers are still waiting for updates on payment uplifts and capital grants, which are unlikely to return until the next financial year.
- Project Delivery: On a positive note, the extension to Hockley National Nature Reserve has been completed, with 100 acres of new land now accessible and infrastructure in place. The reserve, located near a village with an active railway, is one of the few easily accessible National Nature Reserves and will eventually offer open access. Work is ongoing with the local community land trust to enhance the site.
- Board members acknowledged the difficulties caused by funding and staffing uncertainty but welcomed the progress at Hockley NNR and the focus on community access and long-term planning. They agreed that long-term, stable funding and strategic direction are crucial for effective nature recovery and partnership working.

Any other business

- None.

Thank you all, Partnership Board members, and thanks again to the team for their hard work over the last six months.

The next extraordinary meeting is on Tuesday the 24th of June at 2 p.m. here at the Cricket Pavilion.

The next regular board meetings are on Thursday the 20th of November and the 18th of May 2026.

The Chair wished everyone a good summer.

The Meeting closed at 13:15