

Annual Report

2023 - 2024



Photo credited to Angela Thomas.

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1. Introduction

To address the impacts of recreational pressure at Chesil Beach and the Fleet, the [Chesil and Fleet Interim strategy for mitigating the effects of recreational pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, SPA and Ramsar](#) was prepared and adopted by Dorset Council and advised by Natural England. Further information regarding this can be found on [Dorset Council website](#).

2. Background

Under the Interim Strategy the Local Planning Authority collect developer contributions from development within 5kms of Chesil and Fleet European site (SPA and SAC features). These contributions are used to fund mitigation in the form of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and infrastructure projects.

In January 2022 a mitigation coordinator was employed for 1 day per week to coordinate the development of eligible projects and monitoring. In 2021 a Community Ranger was recruited and the mitigation funded RSPB Little tern project officer started in 2021 This seasonal role runs between April – September for the summer breeding season.

2.1. Staff structure

The Core funded staff include a mitigation coordinator managed by Dorset Council, community ranger managed by Dorset Wildlife trust and a little tern project officer managed by RSPB. In January 2022 a mitigation coordinator was employed for 1 day per week to coordinate the partnership and project delivery.

2.2. Governance

The steering group that advises and supports the Chesil and Fleet Partnership is made up of representatives from:

- Dorset Council Planning

- Dorset Council Environment Team
- Dorset Council CIL planning and finance
- Natural England Marine Advice Team Lead
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- RSPB
- Chesil and fleet nature reserve
- Portland court leet
- Crown estates

An agreed Terms of Reference governs the group (appendix 9.1)

2.3. The buffer zone

In the interim period, Natural England have recommended the approach should focus on development within 5km of the Chesil Beach and the Fleet to ensure consistency with the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework.

2.4. Monitoring

Dorset Council do not currently have sufficient data to determine where visitors to Chesil Beach and the Fleet for recreational purposes are travelling from. A survey will be required in future to determine this fully.

3. Plans and Strategies

- 3.1. [Interim strategy for mitigating the effects of recreational pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, SPA and Ramsar](#)
- 3.2. [Chesil and Fleet recreation mitigation monitoring strategy 2022](#)
- 3.3. [visitor surveys and recreation impact assessment conducted in the spring 2022](#)
- 3.4. [Natural England, Site Improvement Plan. Natura 2000](#)

4. Finance

Dorset Council collect SAMMs contributions through Community Infrastructure Levy from developer contributions collected from development within 5Km of Chesil and Fleet SAC and SPA sites. Projects are scored against a matrix and are then reviewed by the steering group.

Stakeholders are encouraged to make applications for funding by contacting the Dorset Council mitigation coordinator. go through a rigorous process to ensure that they prove good value and achieve high standards of mitigation

5. Core funded project updates

- 5.1. Dorset Wildlife Trust Community Ranger (See Appendix 9.2)
- 5.2. Wild Chesil visitor centre (See Appendix 9.3)
- 5.3. RSPB little Tern Officer (See Appendix 9.4)
- 5.4. Dorset Dogs partnership (See Appendix 9.5)

6. Engagement and awareness raising

This section covers engagement activities and projects that are not included in the DWT community ranger or Dorset dogs report (appendix 9.2 and 9.5)

6.1. Fleet Explorer

The Fleet Explorer (FE), previously the Fleet Observer has been operating on the Fleet for over 20 years. The boat is used to run trips to educate visitors, locals, schools and community groups about the conservation designations, habitats and wildlife on Chesil Beach and the Fleet Lagoon. The FE is also the best way for people on site to find out about the little tern project without disturbing the colony or wardens. The trips are an hour long and engage approximately 1500 people each year.

The Fleet Explorer is a valuable asset for helping to deliver the Interim Strategy and an annual contribution of £4683.40 for a 5 year period would go towards the costs of running the boat, helping to secure its future.

6.2. Branding design

The partnership branding will streamline the need for multiple logos on interpretation, signage, print and digital media. Currently new signs that contain all partnership logos look cluttered and confusing whilst those without the logos aren't communicating the breadth of organisations working within the partnership. This branding will showcase the mitigation work and messaging and over time will be seen to represent the Chesil and Fleet Landscape.

It will facilitate engagement by making it easier to communicate the partnership, messaging and aims with a clear visual identity and messaging that can be used verbally, in print media and infrastructure.

7. Infrastructure projects (delivered / in progress)

7.1. RSPB Signage

RSPB requested £2732 for new signage at the Chesil little tern colony. Signage consists of the following types:

- 'No access'
- 'No landing'
- 'Access to Chesil Bank'
- Electricity warning
-

These mitigate recreational disturbance ensuring that visitors to site know how to behave and have the essential health and safety warnings explained very clearly.

7.2. CFNR Northern boundary fence

At the western end of the Fleet stands a boundary fence used to delineate the seasonal closure on Chesil Bank. The fence runs from the Fleet shore up to and over the crest of Chesil. From this point running east, Chesil has two closures. Firstly is the inner flank, which is the Fleet side of

Chesil and is closed all year round to protect sensitive habitats and wildlife from human disturbance. Secondly the outer flank, on the seaward (Lyme Bay) side, is closed to the public from 1st May to 31st August, to protect ground nesting birds and vegetation. During the rest of the year there is public access to this seaward side by permission of the landowner.

The fence is in poor condition and its current location is likely to cause damage to the grade listed WWII anti-tank defences (Tank Teeth). The signage here is limited, with very little interpretation to describe the Reserves' importance and the reasons for the closures. Despite these closures, access to the eastern side of this fence is a constant year-round problem, causing damage to vegetation and habitat, and causing significant disturbance. The proposal is to completely remove the existing boundary fence and re-build a replacement several meters to the east. Members of the public commonly come around the fence to access the Tank Teeth and pillbox, so moving it would negate this need for access. Having a new boundary fence would also show that this is a managed part of the Nature Reserve.

8. Future Project Planning and updates 2024/25

8.1. Tidmoor to Hive point rights of way improvement

The Right of way on the Tidmoor to Hive point section of the Fleet is part of two national trails; The South West Coast Path which is a 630 mile long footpath between Minehead to Exmoor and the Jurassic coast footpath between Exmouth and Poole Bay, making this section of path extremely busy to visitors as well as locals year round.

Working collaboratively with the CAF Partnership, Dorset Rights of Way team and the South West Coast Path Trail Officer we would like to improve this footpath section to benefit people and nature.

The section in need of resurfacing runs from Hive point to Tidmoor point (see location maps below) and is currently inaccessible during the winter due to poor drainage and degraded surfacing. This pushes walkers directly onto the foreshore at what is otherwise a very quiet and protected section along the Fleet. The attached Heatmaps highlight where walkers on the foreshore are going. Due to the quiet nature of this section more severe flushing takes place as birds are sensitized to disturbance at quieter locations and as this is primarily an issue in winter it directly impacts the SPA winter migratory species.

8.2. Development of the 'birders code'

The level of disturbance from some birders on site is sustainable and so the Community Ranger and Mitigation Coordinator will be working to engage this community to develop a birders code of conduct.

8.3. Wild Chesil visitor centre low roped fence

DWT will be submitting a proforma in 2024 for a low roped fence to help zone off access to the mudflats directly from the visitor centre. The aim will be to discourage this access point and have interpretation that explains the importance of the mudflats.

8.4. Litter Free Dorset Campaign

Litter free Dorset have started discussion with the CAF partnership about leading a campaign to help us promote more sustainable recreation and to engage audiences that we are currently not reaching.

The proforma will be submitted in spring 2024 after consultation with the key members of the CAF partnership.

9. Appendix

9.1. Terms of Reference



Chesil and the Fleet
Mitigation SG Terms

9.2. Dorset Wildlife Trust Community Ranger



End of season
report 2023 - 2024.d

9.3. Wild Chesil visitor centre



CAF Centre report
23 24.docx

9.4. RSPB little Tern Officer



CLT annual report
2023MA.pdf

9.5. Dorset Dogs partnership



Dorset Dogs
delivery for Chesil ar