Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025

Consultation draft

Eggardon Hill, ©Ali Quinney

NATURE RECOVERY DORSET

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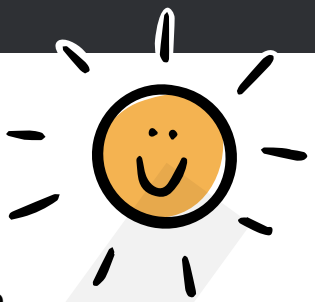
Foreword



Steering group members provide their thoughts on the experience of being involved in preparing this collaborative strategy:

> The collaborative process to form this new strategy has been a superb effort across the two local authority teams, the wide range of experts involved and all the various landowners and organisations. Nature recovery is so important in both rural and urban areas and this strategy really creates a call to action for positive change, from hedgehog highways to landscape scale change.

Councillor Andy Hadley, Cabinet Member for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, BCP Council

> We appreciate the diligent work which has gone into preparing this strategy and are very happy to have played our part. The local nature recovery Strategy team seriously engaged with farmers and landowners from early in the process and the strategy is very much the better for this.

Mark Burton, Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

> The Dorset local nature strategy offers a comprehensive vision to safeguard and restore our natural environment. It underscores Dorset Council's dedication to addressing the current nature emergency and serves as a rallying call for residents, workers, and visitors to unite for nature recovery. At its core, the strategy prioritises increasing wildlife diversity and abundance, promoting sustainable land use, and ensuring accessible natural spaces for all. I am inspired by the collaboration of organisations, businesses, farmers, and individuals who have co-produced this strategy, working together to make Dorset nature-rich, healthier, and more resilient.

Councillor Nick Ireland, Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding, Dorset Council

Being part of the steering group for the Dorset local nature recovery strategy has been an inspiring experience, bringing together a wealth of local knowledge and expertise to create a shared vision for nature recovery. This collaboration highlights the collective commitment across Dorset to protect, enhance and embrace our natural environment.

Shelley Collins-Trevett, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy is a key piece of our work in the county to enhance and improve the state of nature in Dorset. Despite our home county being a fabulously rich place in terms of landscape, we know that nature is still declining and we need to act and with urgency to improve ecological resilience and biodiversity. The Local Nature Partnership has been proud to work with other stakeholders to enable this vital strategy.

Luke Rake, former chair Dorset Local Nature Partnership

Half of Dorset is nationally recognised for its natural beauty, in which the quality of nature is an integral part. The local nature recovery strategy helps set out how we can ensure natural beauty is enhanced into the future, and it's great to have played our part in its development.

Ian Rees, Dorset National Landscape

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy has given us the opportunity to examine together how nature is faring across our area and what is collectively needed to reverse declines, so that wildlife thrives and we can all connect with and benefit from a healthy environment. Some of the answers have been sobering and there is much to do to meet the ambitious goals, but the commitment shown from people and organisations with a wide range of interests to make this happen gives huge optimism.

Imogen Davenport, Dorset Wildlife Trust

We have been pleased to link in the voluntary and community sector with this vital work for Dorset. Finding ways to work together and amplify our communities' voices and involvement with nature recovery through this strategy development process has been inspiring and empowering.

Jon Sloper, Help And Kindness

The conservation movement has spent decades developing techniques to help conserve our last remaining wildlife. Despite this every time we check on the state of nature it has further declined. We need to change how we work, to evolve from nature conservation to delivering nature recovery. This document, and the consultation that went into producing it, begins to chart a strategy for that recovery. While this is, at its core, a strategy for nature recovery it has been crafted mindful of the need for our countryside to fulfil multiple functions, including hosting profitable businesses and providing rural employment. I commend the report to all who have an interest in the future of Dorset's countryside, we now need to make it happen.

Ian Alexander, Natural England

This document, and the breadth of the partnership that contributed time, energy and hard work to create it, marks the commitment of so many people across Dorset to nature recovery. The health of our natural environment is vital for the health and wellbeing of residents and this strategy is an opportunity to drive improvements for nature, improve quality of life and reduce health inequalities.

Rachel Partridge, Public Health Dorset

Thank you

Dorset Council, BCP Council and Natural England would like to thank all the people who have helped in some way contribute to preparing this strategy and its maps, which will ensure collective action to achieve the best outcomes for nature and people in Dorset.

Steering group visit to Kingston Maurward College

Executive summary

Dorset's natural environment supports a wide variety of wildlife and local communities. People across the county depend on nature for health, food, water, economy and enjoyment. And healthy ecosystems, with thriving wildlife, provide essential nature-based solutions to climate change, flood protection and pollution. Our environment and its benefits hold real value to us and the wildlife we share this county with.

However, over the years, we have weakened this environmental asset. The amount and variety of wildlife in our county have reduced, and many areas for nature have been split up or lost. Dorset's local nature recovery strategy marks an end to this loss and decline. It is the point at which we begin the process of nature recovery by restoring, expanding and creating space for nature across the county.

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy is a celebration, uniting individuals, communities and organisations in a joint mission to address the climate and nature emergencies. At the heart of the strategy is a shared vision for nature in Dorset to be thriving, resilient and enjoyed by all.

The strategy calls for everyone to play a role in creating more sustainable practices that benefit both nature and people, whether it involves sustainable farming, forestry, urban planning, or wildlife-friendly gardening. With around 70% of the land being managed by farming, foresters, and landowners, they will play a pivotal role in this effort, delivering agricultural productivity alongside sustainable land management and habitat restoration to support biodiversity.

The co-produced strategy provides a comprehensive framework for restoring nature across the county. It contains 12 nature recovery priorities, supported by detailed activities. Its spatial element - the local habitat map - will help target efforts to achieve the greatest gains for biodiversity and the wider environment. Fifty-four priority species have been identified as needing bespoke activities to ensure they remain or return to Dorset. Together these tools ensure a strategic, collective and effective approach to nature recovery across the county.

Tree planting

Funding continues to pose a significant challenge to achieving the ambitious 30by30 target in Dorset, which aims to protect and manage 30% of land for nature by 2030. However, opportunities exist through biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation projects, environmental land management schemes, and local collaborations. Community-driven projects and innovative funding mechanisms will be crucial to bridging gaps and ensuring progress.

Progress will be monitored through a review process led by Dorset Council, which will assess achievements every 3 to 10 years. This process will evaluate completed activities and their impacts, supported by existing monitoring initiatives that track habitats, species, and enabling measures. These insights will help refine and strengthen ongoing efforts, ensuring the strategy remains adaptive and effective.

By everyone working together, we will create more space for nature and Dorset's nature areas will be better, bigger and joined up, creating a legacy for future generations.

Shared vision

Nature in Dorset is thriving, resilient, and connected across our landscapes. It is accessible to and celebrated by all

Joint mission

Collectively work together to meet the urgent need and ambition to address the climate and nature emergencies through nature recovery

Introduction

Nature recovery

Dorset is home to a wide variety of habitats, such as heathland, grassland, woodland, wetland and coastal areas, which support a whole range of species. But over the years the amount and variety of wildlife in our county has reduced and many areas for nature have been split up or lost, leading to a nature emergency. Find out more about this in Nature in Dorset.

Nature recovery is the process of actively restoring and enhancing the natural environment by creating more wildlife-rich spaces across the countryside, coast and towns.

By making more space for nature, nature recovery will:

- increase the diversity and abundance of plants, animals and other wildlife, to address declines in biodiversity
- create and restore a network of habitats, connected by more wildlife-rich spaces across our towns, villages, roads and farmland
- restore naturally functioning ecosystems that are more resilient to pressures
- improve water quality for people and wildlife, by reducing the sources of pollution and supporting nature to filter out pollution
- help us combat climate change, storing and absorbing carbon in habitats like woodland, peatland and saltmarsh
- make people and wildlife more resilient to the impacts of climate change
- protect people's homes and buildings from flooding, by using nature-based solutions like trees and floodplains to slow the flow of water across the landscape
- support farmers and growers to provide healthy and sustainable food with healthier soils and cleaner water
- boost our physical and mental health, with more wildlife-rich spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. Plus more natural features in towns will help improve air quality and cooling during heatwaves, and reduce inequalities in access to nature which play a part in unfair differences in health outcomes
- support our rural economy to be sustainable for future generations, protecting and growing jobs across sectors such as farming, land management, tourism, and food and drink.

The 30by30 target

The overarching ambition of Dorset's first local nature recovery strategy is to help achieve the national and international 30by30 target to protect and manage 30% of land and rivers for nature by 2030.

Simply put, an area can count towards the 30by30 criteria if:

- the purpose or management objectives include positive outcomes for nature
- there are long term commitments to biodiversity and protections against loss or damage to biodiversity
- management and monitoring are in place to deliver the intended benefits for nature

Local nature recovery strategies

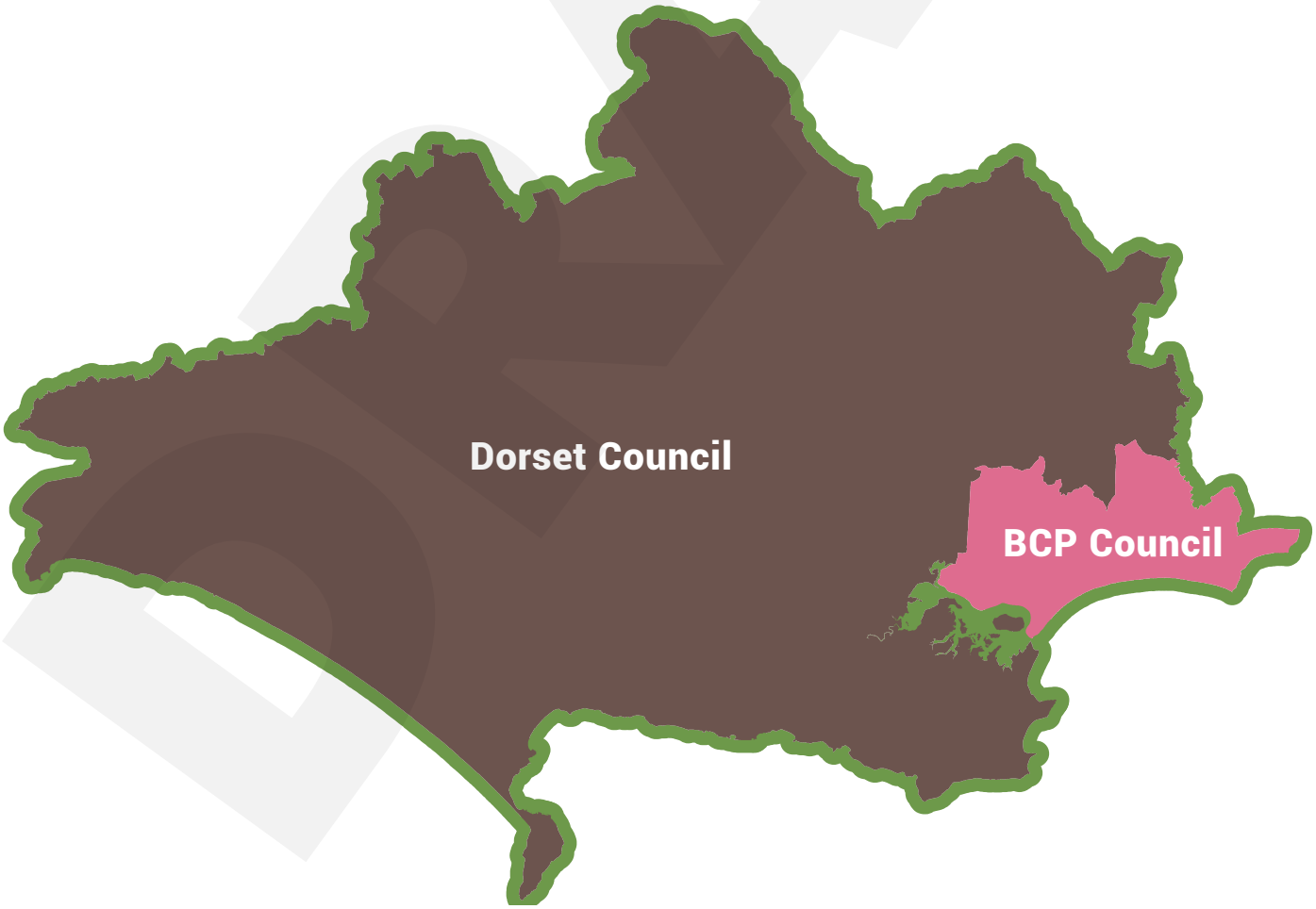
In 2023, the UK Government tasked each county or combined authority area in England with developing a local nature recovery strategy, as a requirement of the Environment Act (2021) and subsequent statutory guidance.

These spatial strategies will provide the framework to drive forward a nature recovery network across England, by agreeing local priorities and mapping locations where activities will most effectively contribute to these goals.

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy covers the county of Dorset, including both Dorset Council and BCP Council areas. The strategy covers all the land and freshwater, up to the inter tidal zone as far as mean low water, the strategy does not cover the marine environment.

Dorset Council was appointed as responsible authority to coordinate and facilitate the preparation of Dorset's local nature recovery strategy, working closely with BCP Council and Natural England as supporting authorities, and a wide range of local people and organisations.

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy area



Making space for nature

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy uses the 4 key principles of creating "more, bigger, better and joined" spaces for nature, as outlined in the Making Space for Nature report led by Professor Sir John Lawton in 2010, now often referred to as the Lawton principles.

This strategy uses the Lawton principles as a basis for nature recovery across Dorset, and outlines how we will commit to making better, bigger, more and joined up space for nature.

The principles are explained in the boxes below, they are listed in order of importance. This order was set out by Lawton in the original report and built upon in Natural England's Nature Networks - a summary for practitioners.

Better	Improve management of existing 'core' nature sites to improve diversity and restore natural processes
Bigger	Create much larger nature areas across the landscape, making the current 'core' nature areas big enough to be naturally functioning and resilient
More	Create new natural habitats in areas where there currently aren't any, choosing places that connect to existing 'core' nature areas
Joined up	Join nature areas by creating corridors and stepping stones to allow wildlife to travel further. Also, increase nature friendly management of the intervening land

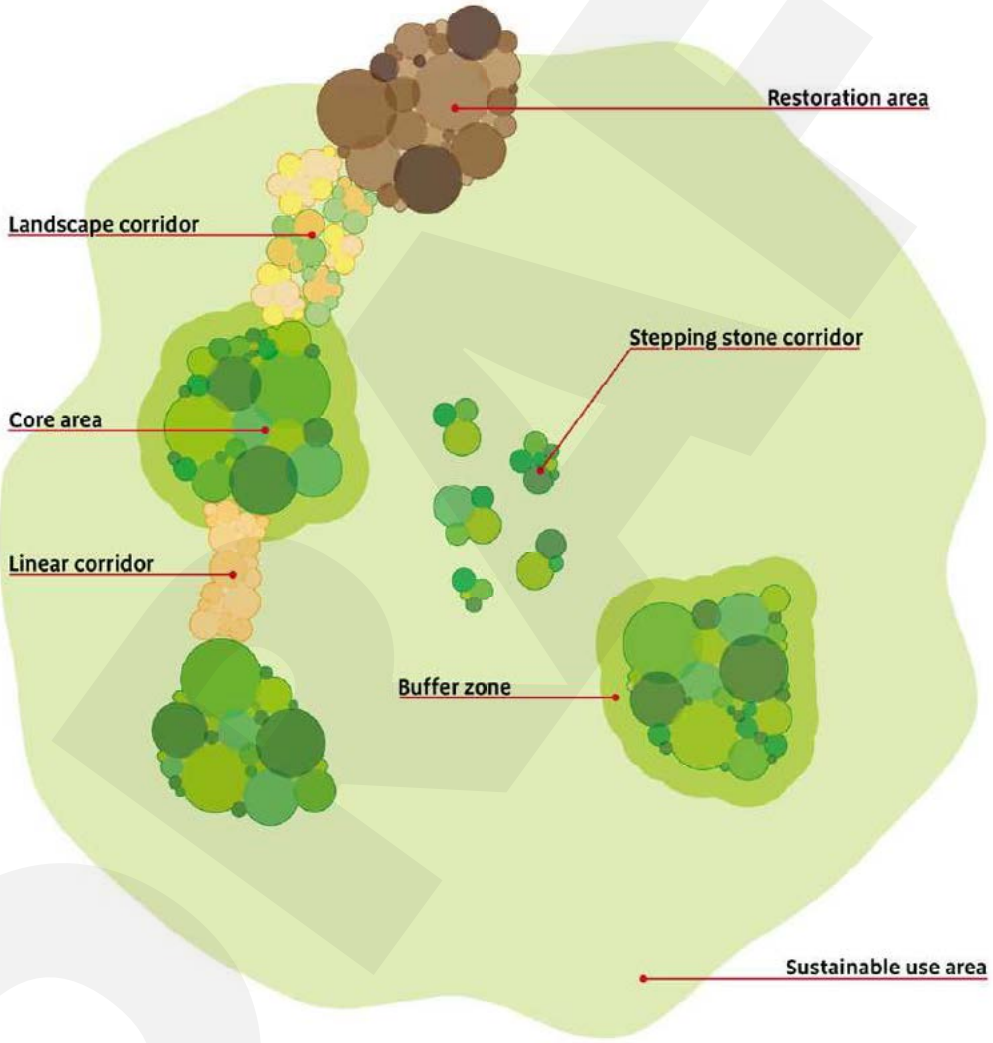
Making better, bigger, more and joined space for nature helps strengthen and grow a nature recovery network.

Growing a nature recovery network

Core areas
Natural habitats that are already important for nature and can be managed to better support wildlife and natural proceses

Buffer zones
Making 'core' areas big enough to be naturally functioning and protected from external pressures or environmental shocks e.g. flooding, fire or drought

Restoration area
Creating or restoring natural habitat in places that connect to 'core' nature areas



Stepping stones
Smaller nature areas that provide resting and feeding places for wildlife as they travel between 'core' nature areas

Sustainable use area
Land in between nature areas is managed or developed in a more nature-friendly way

Corridors
Uninterrupted strips of habitat that provides a safe passage for wildlife e.g. rivers and hedgerows

Image: Lawton et al (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network.

Purpose

This local nature recovery strategy provides a 10-year framework to enable everyone to work together and achieve the shared vision for nature recovery across Dorset. It is a strategic tool that will enable further collective action and help target future efforts.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- provide a clear understanding of Dorset's current biodiversity and opportunities for nature recovery
- build on the long-standing efforts of local communities, farmers, land managers, foresters and wildlife organisations to support nature recovery across the county
- create a unified approach to nature recovery over the next 10 years, to agree what Dorset is trying to achieve and how everyone can contribute in different ways
- provide clear priorities, proposed activities and mapped high opportunity nature areas for a wide range of people to use as a guide to support nature recovery across Dorset
- inform local land management, planning and development decisions to ensure nature recovery is considered
- support people and organisations putting together land management plans, funding bids, landscape recovery projects and other related plans (e.g. transport, local plans)
- promote further partnership working to deliver nature recovery on large landscape scale and create a nature recovery network
- target future efforts and resources by mapping locations where activities can achieve the best outcomes for nature and the wider environment
- enable Dorset to monitor future progress by establishing more coordinated mechanisms for monitoring and recording activities.

River Stour

©Harry Williams

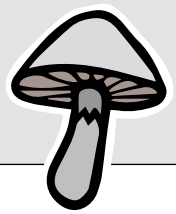
The strategy does not:

- replace land management plans, project plans or green infrastructure plans - these will still be prepared by those delivering nature recovery
- remove the need for local knowledge, expert advice, or field assessments when planning what mix of activities to carry out in an area. Maps are to be used as a guide only. It's important to check the suitability of local soils, slope of the land and water levels. You may need advice from an ecologist or farm/ forestry advisor
- replace the need to refer to best practice guidance, legislation, regulatory processes and local policies when planning to carry out nature recovery activities
- dictate which funding route to use to deliver nature recovery activities
- force the owners and managers of the land identified as high opportunity nature areas to make any changes, they have flexibility to identify what, if any, activities and funding options will work best for them
- prevent the development of new homes and infrastructure, instead the strategy helps guide biodiversity and environmental activities to deliver as part of sustainable development
- aim to replace recreation grounds and parks with nature reserves, the strategy focuses on adjusting the balance to allow people and wildlife to thrive
- propose new nature protections, designations or restrictions in high opportunity nature areas
- stop nature conservation work happening in places outside the high opportunity nature areas
- provide a complete land-use or food strategy for the county, the focus of this strategy is on sustainable farming practices that minimise disruption to ecology and natural processes, to deliver nature recovery alongside food production
  - » wider food system issues have been considered in The National Food Strategy based on evidence and expertise from across food, farming & nature sectors
  - » locally, The Feeding Dorset Partnership brings together pioneering food champions and projects to improve the resilience of supply and access to healthy and sustainable food
  - » wider issues around sustainable development and infrastructure are considered in other national and local strategies, such as local plans and transport plans. These have their own consultation and engagement processes
- focus on improving people's access to nature, however, this strategy does include activities to increase nature connectedness and map locations to create more nature-rich areas near people's homes. Wider work on access to nature is ongoing, such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and projects supporting people to overcome barriers to accessing nature.

Who is the strategy for?

The strategy is a tool to help everyone in Dorset work together, celebrate success and enable further collective action. The table below highlights what the strategy offers to different sectors across the county.

Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land managers	Communities & Individuals	Business, Industry & Economy
People who own and/or manage land (for example, farms, woodlands and estates)	Members of the public and local voluntary or community sector organisations	Large and small businesses across all sectors (for example, utilities, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, building development)
• includes potential activities suggested by local farmers, foresters and land managers already delivering nature recovery • proposes potential activities that can be funded through Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) and other funding routes • identifies high opportunity nature areas where funding can be targeted to deliver nature recovery • showcases where farmers or foresters are working together in clusters or landscape projects, and more opportunities to connect up • showcases economic benefits of nature recovery and where private finance could be targeted	• showcases what communities are already doing for nature and how others can get involved • suggests potential activities that can be done in all types of outdoor spaces, across the countryside, and in towns or villages • supports funding applications for nature recovery projects • identifies high opportunity nature areas, creating more nature-rich spaces for people to enjoy • shows how community activities can join up with others across the landscape • helps deliver priorities in neighbourhood plans	• shares best practice from businesses and industries delivering nature recovery • proposes potential activities that can be delivered by businesses of different types and sizes • identifies high opportunity nature areas for delivering nature recovery in the countryside, on industrial sites, and in urban towns • showcases economic benefits of nature recovery and where private finance could be targeted • guides how development sites can help create, enhance and join habitats, and deliver wider environmental benefits



Public bodies

Local government, town and parish councils, regional government bodies and agencies, and public service providers

- shares best practice of how public bodies are helping nature recovery
- helps the production of local plans and the delivery of sustainable development
- provides a county-wide approach to biodiversity net gain, identifying potential locations for off-site biodiversity net gain through the high opportunity nature areas
- supports efforts to improve health and wellbeing by increasing use of nature-based activities and increasing people's contact with nature as part of everyday life
- identifies where habitat creation or enhancement can also help deliver wider public sector responsibilities, such as flood protection and carbon storage
- informs statutory, funding and operational decision making as part of the biodiversity duty

Nature & Environment sector

Individuals and organisations with expertise or interest in nature, environmental issues and managing land for conservation purposes

- showcases success stories and best practice from local nature projects
- brings together a variety of work into a shared list of priorities that everyone can work towards
- supports funding applications from a range of public, private and voluntary sector funding
- identifies high opportunity nature areas where action can achieve the most benefits for nature and wider environment
- connects people across sectors, and shows locations where there might be more opportunities to join up

Partnerships & Connectors

Existing groups that work collaboratively across sectors or on specific issues

- helps strengthen and grow existing partnerships
- forms new connections across sectors
- links the people of Dorset together under one framework to commit to delivering nature recovery across Dorset
- supports funding applications from a range of public, private and voluntary sector funding
- identifies high opportunity nature areas where efforts can be focused to achieve the most benefits

Working in partnership

Co-produced strategy

This local nature recovery strategy has been prepared with input, support, advice and guidance from a diverse range of people and organisations. It builds on a strong history of partnership working in Dorset, and many successful efforts to care for our natural environment.

Between July 2023 to December 2024, a steering group and 5 advisory groups worked together to shape and input into the strategy, with representatives from 42 different organisations. **The steering group ensured strategy preparation was inclusive, transparent, and timely, with representatives from organisations spanning many different sectors:**

- BCP Council
- Country Land and Business Association (CLA)
- Dorset Council
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
- Dorset National Landscape
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Dorset Youth
- Help and Kindness
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- Natural England
- Public Health Dorset

The 5 advisory groups were set specific tasks to help prepare the strategy, meeting regularly and attending an all-groups workshop. Some of the tasks involved members gathering more inputs from wider stakeholders within their networks. **The 5 advisory groups included:**

- mapping and data advisory group
- species task and finish group
- farmer cluster advisory group
- nature, farming, forestry and land use advisory group
- communications and engagement advisory group

In addition, other people took part in a range of **events, workshops or online webinars** refining the strategy and maps over time.

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation and Engagement Report provides more detail on the groups, engagement activities and data insights.

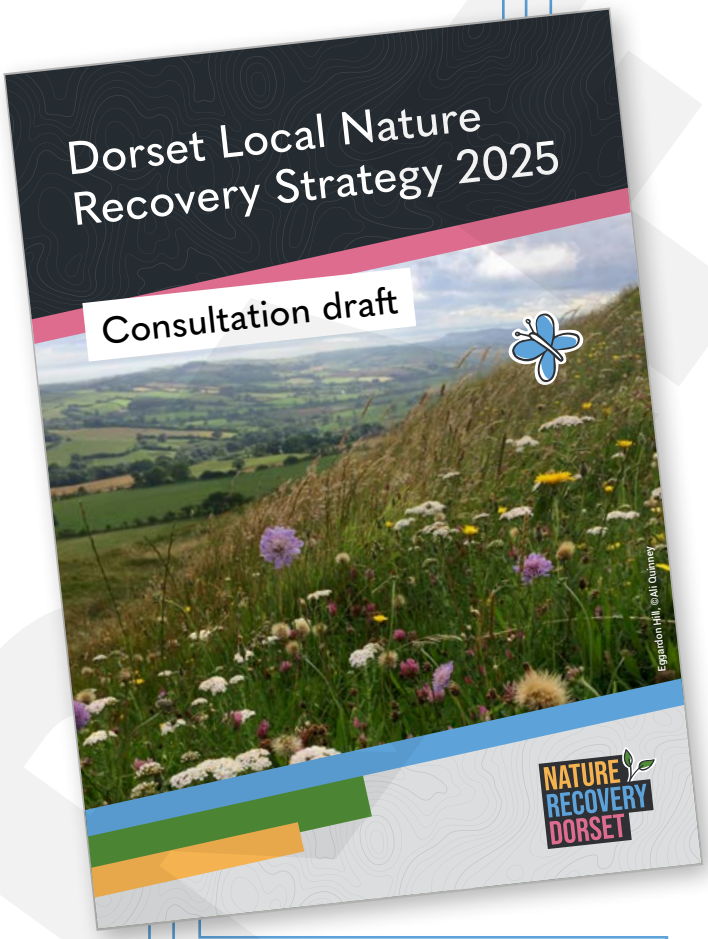
The infographic on the next page represents the tremendous input and commitment from the people of Dorset, showing an ambition for Dorset to become a place where nature thrives.

Workshop with advisory group members

1,300 hours given by 76 advisory group members from 42 organisations

1,375 people involved in workshops, events and webinars

183 Nature Recovery Dorset network members



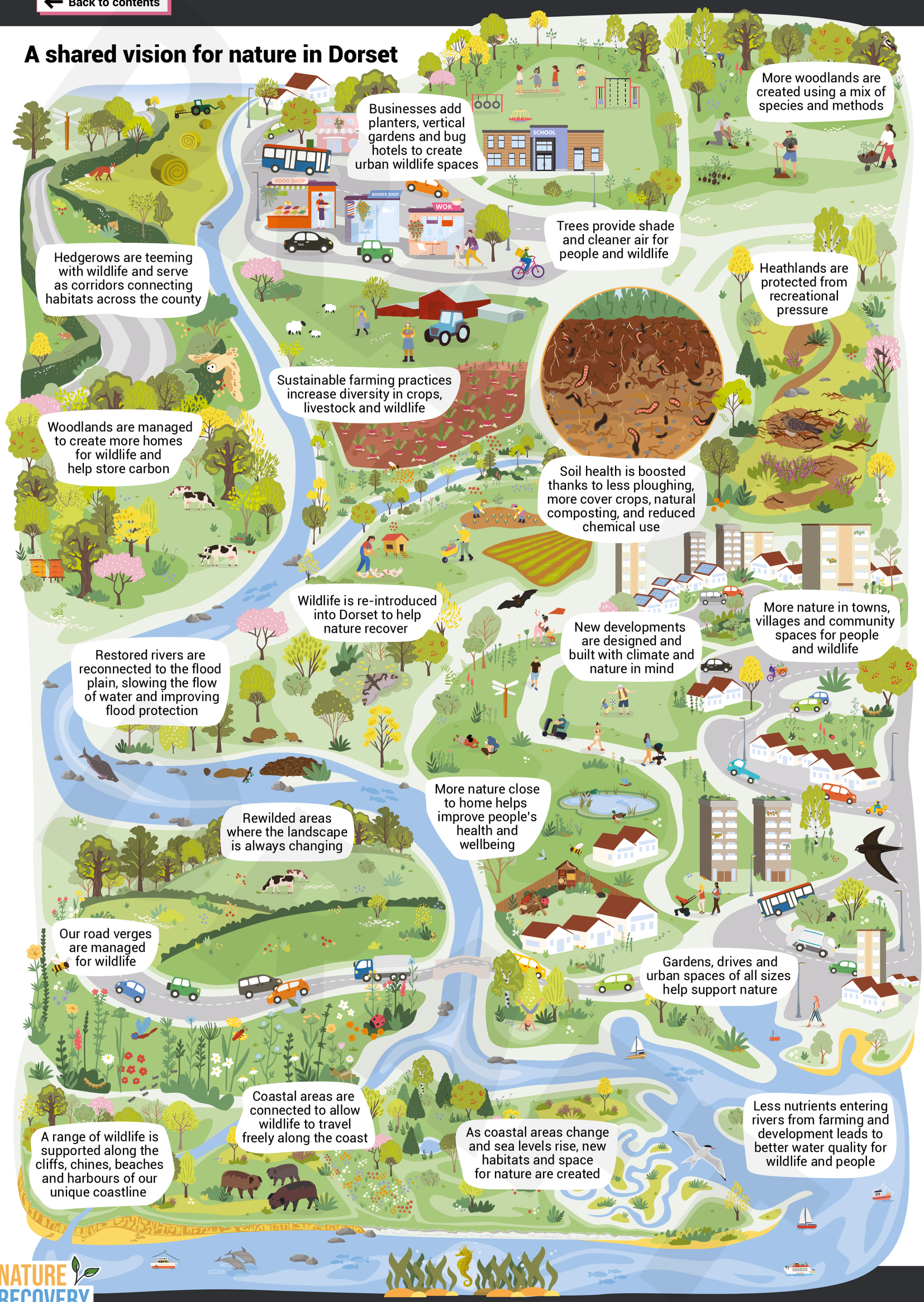
93 land manager proposals for the high opportunity nature areas

42 social media posts reaching 152,600 people

3,147 views on the Dorset local nature recovery webpages and 88,000 people read our e-news articles

Infographic correct as of 21 January 2025.

A shared vision for nature in Dorset



Nature in Dorset

Dorset's biodiversity

Dorset is known for its natural beauty, with a network of habitats that provide homes to a wide range of wildlife. Fifty-two per cent of Dorset is designated as National Landscape, the highest proportion of any English county. For a small county, Dorset punches far above its weight for biodiversity but has still been affected by the declines in nature observed across the world.

Its central position on England's southern coast, and geological diversity, are key factors in Dorset's wildlife richness. From extensive acidic and infertile sands, gravels and clays in the south-east of the county, to a central broad sweep of high, rolling chalk country, clay vales to the north and west and a complete sequence of Jurassic rocks along its coastline, the stage is set for an impressive range of habitats.

Fine examples of chalk downland survive on steeper slopes where grazing maintains species-rich grassland featuring fine grasses, aromatic herbs, and a select band of orchids. Dark green fritillary and Adonis blue butterflies still flourish in places, alongside stripe winged grasshoppers, and countless other insects.

The coastal limestones exhibit some differences from the chalk. Often the grassland here is dominated by coarse tor-grass, but where well-grazed, these coastal slopes in Purbeck support England's largest population of early spider orchids. Lulworth skipper butterflies are restricted to this coast, while Portland's unique landscape is a stronghold for many scarce species, including mosses and lichens.

Kingcombe and Powerstock Common are among the best surviving examples of the scattered pastures and hay meadows of the clay vales, these species-rich grasslands display gems such as waxcap fungi, adder's tongue and green winged orchid and are home to surviving populations of marsh fritillary butterfly.

Heathlands surrounding Poole Harbour and stretching from the river Avon almost to Dorchester, represent an evocative, cultural landscape that for millennia supported a rural economy. The Dorset heaths are internationally

Slepe Heath

Hunger Hill rain garden

important and are some of the biggest and finest remaining areas of lowland heathland in the UK, representing around 14% of England's heathland. The heathers, gorses and bog-moss filled mires still impart a sense of the wild. For those keen to search and listen, there is an unrivalled suite of special wildlife. Treasures like Dorset heather, marsh gentian, golden bog-moss, nightjar, woodlark, sand lizard, and silver-studded blue butterflies - some which are unique to Dorset or have their largest populations here.

Dorset's scatter of truly ancient woodlands varies with soils and topography. On steep chalk slopes ash and field maple trees are typical, while on heavier or more acidic soils, oak and hazel dominate, in all cases accompanied by other smaller trees and shrubs. Spring flora of these old woodlands include bluebell, wood anemone, ramsons, woodruff and early purple orchid. Veteran trees in wood pasture and old parkland can support rare lichens that are internationally important.

Across and through this range of broad habitats, run Dorset's rivers. The flashy clay river Stour and its many tributaries, and smaller similar rivers like the Brit and Corfe, and the ephemeral winterbournes. Dorset is also home to globally important chalk streams. England boasts the highest number of chalk rivers in Europe, and Dorset alone accounts for around 14% of these streams by length. As well as the watercourses, with their fish, invertebrates, kingfishers, water voles and otters, floodplains still support riparian woodland of willow and alder, or reedbeds and wetland habitats like marshes. In rare cases, floodplains are also home to species-rich grassland, wildflower meadows of marsh marigold, marsh orchids, and ragged robin. The heathlands in the south east of the county form part of the Dorset and New Forest Important Freshwater Landscape, which is 1 of 24 nationally important areas for freshwater biodiversity, with many high-quality river reaches and an exceptional concentration of endangered aquatic species.

Most of these rivers eventually feed into Dorset's 2 natural harbours, Christchurch and Poole, the latter being the second largest in the world. There are coastal habitats of saltmarshes, reedbeds, shingle spits, cliffs, chines, and at Studland, the largest area of acidic sand dune heath in England. Winter bird numbers of international importance, nesting terns and gulls, and now osprey and white-tailed eagle are highlights of these wonderful places, often to be witnessed from vantage points in nearby towns. Nestled within a busy urban area, the combined area of Christchurch Harbour, Hengistbury Head, Stanpit Marsh and the Lower Stour is a nature-

rich haven. This area is home to over 25% of the UK's native plant species, 40% of its moths and butterflies, and 50% of its bird species.

Another outstanding feature is the Fleet - the largest area of brackish lagoon in the country - sheltered behind Chesil, one of England's 3 great shingle structures. Both sites hold special wildlife.

Dorset's coastline forms part of the Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site recognised for its outstanding rocks, fossils and landforms. It stretches 95 miles across parts of Dorset and East Devon.

The Dorset nature recovery maps show ecological networks that cover most of the semi-natural habitats we have in Dorset: grassland, woodland, heathland, wetland and coastal. Semi-natural habitats are those that have been changed in some ways by human activity, but still retain much of their biodiversity and natural processes. Other nature areas may still provide habitat or be managed using nature-friendly practices, but have been more seriously changed by human activity, and so lack the same level of biodiversity and naturally well-functioning ecosystems. For example:

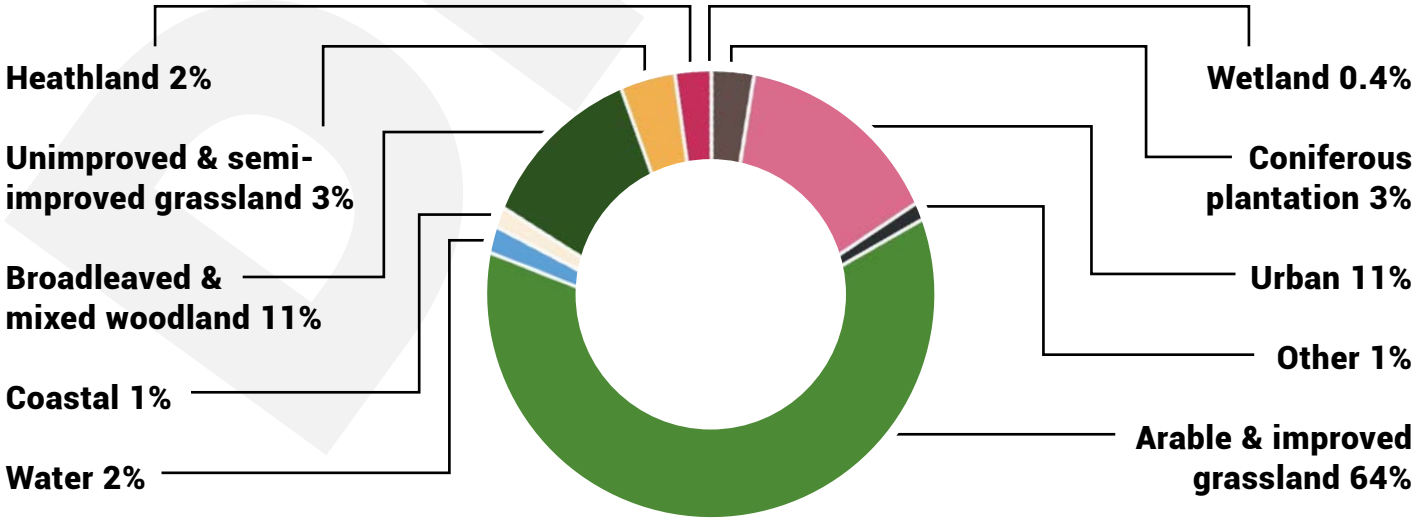
- arable and improved grassland - land used for growing crops, grazing livestock, or sometimes recreation in parks and sports fields
- coniferous plantation – land used to grow a crop of trees, often with non-native species
- gardens in homes and public spaces growing plants and trees

The figure below shows roughly how these different habitat types and land uses cover Dorset. The percentages are based on a land cover map produced for Dorset using local data, expertise, and some satellite imagery in 2018. The map identified 163 habitat classes (using the Integrated Habitat System) which were simplified into 30 legend classes, from which the ecological networks were created.

Although water only covers about 2% of the county, there are 4611.6km of rivers and streams across Dorset. Of these, almost a third are globally rare chalk streams (1460km).

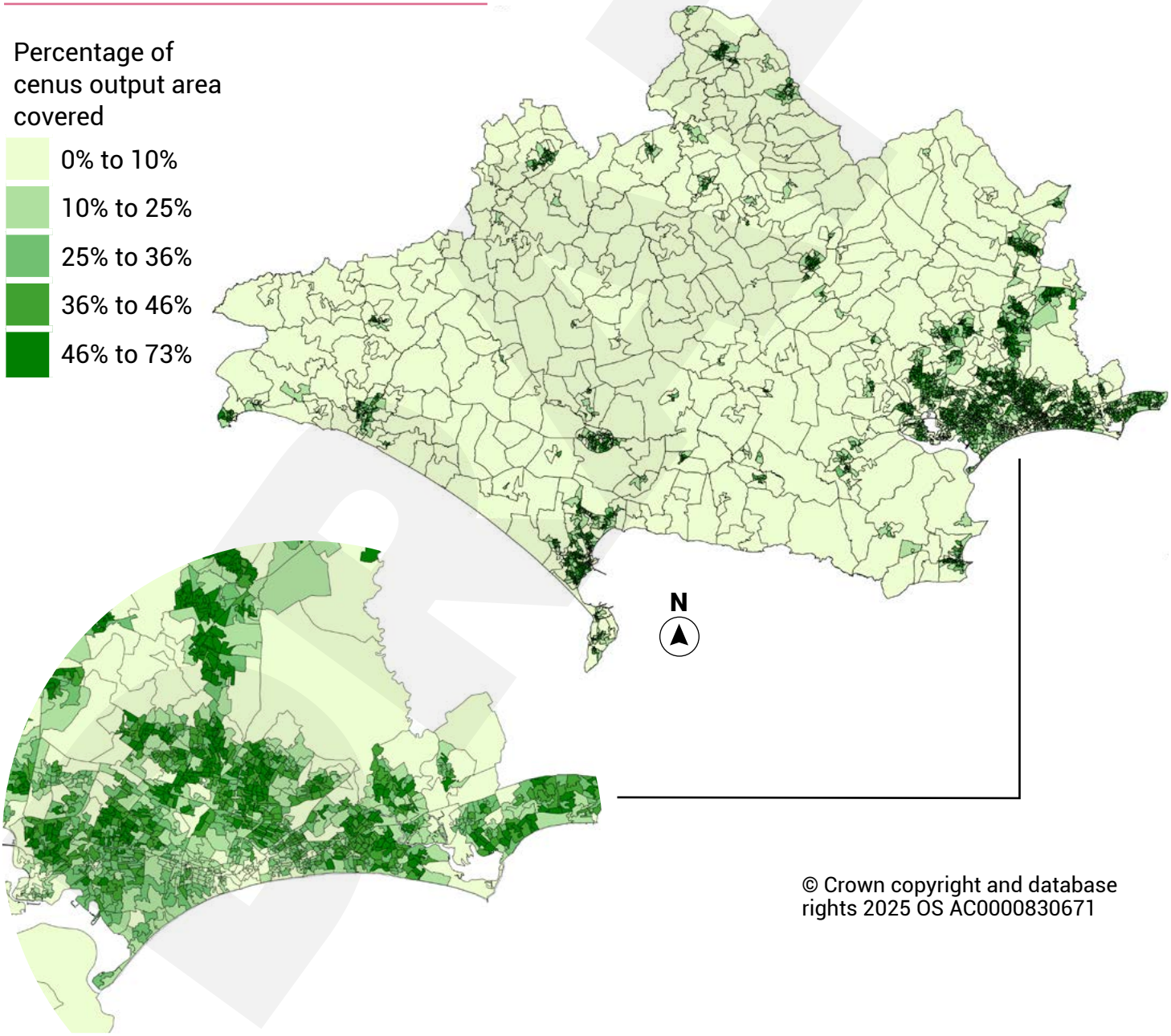
Find out more about this data on page 100.

Approximate percentage of land cover in Dorset



Urban areas cover 11% of the county, including buildings, roads, and some of the green infrastructure in-between, as well as gardens in people's homes. Overall residential gardens cover around 4% of Dorset, but in some towns around 70% of the area is covered by gardens. Using data from the census, the map below indicates how much of each area of Dorset is covered by gardens. This highlights the importance of using wildlife-friendly gardening practices everywhere, especially in areas where gardens provide most of the space for nature and important connectivity with the wider countryside. Find out more on how our gardens and public parks can make a big difference to nature recovery in priority 6.

Census Area and Garden Coverage



Find the source of this information on page 100.

Safeguarding and promoting Dorset's biodiversity

Dorset is widely recognised as a reservoir of biodiversity, providing a home for rare and declining wildlife. This status brings with it a responsibility to safeguard and promote populations of wildlife such as bat species and rare reptiles, which are not commonly found elsewhere. Taking steps to protect and enhance species and ecosystems. Where species exist in low numbers or in sub-optimal habitats, such as the hazel dormouse, taking steps to protect them and enhance their habitats ensures biodiversity 'hotspots' continue. This allows space for species populations to thrive and eventually disperse and establish more widely. One way this can be achieved is through the establishment of protected areas like wildlife reserves. And through bolstering the wider ecological network, involving native and local habitat communities.

Dormouse nest tube

Declines in Dorset's nature

Declines in nature are worrying and have alarming impacts on wildlife and people. By understanding the pressures causing these declines, we can identify opportunities to reverse them and restore balance, allowing nature to thrive.

Until recently, Dorset's habitat diversity and wildlife abundance had remained relatively stable for thousands of years. However, in recent decades, the amount, variety and condition of habitats and species in Dorset has reduced. Many areas for nature have been degraded, split up or lost. The State of Nature report shows similar trends are happening across the UK.

In many places, habitats have become smaller and disconnected (known as fragmentation). This prevents species from moving freely from place to place, making them more vulnerable to pressures and increasing the risk of extinction. An example of this can be found on Turbary Common, where urban development has fragmented the heathland. This has led to resident adders being isolated from other populations, resulting in inbreeding which has caused deformities in their scales.

Nature (biodiversity) decline means that our ecosystems are not thriving and are less able to cope with change. This often results in a decline and degradation of essential ecosystem services, such as clean water and good air quality, which benefit people.

Grassland (1930 to 2015)

- **97%** decline in neutral grassland and **70%** decline in calcareous grassland
- **64%** neutral grassland converted to improved grassland
- **43%** calcareous grassland converted to arable, **47%** converted to improved grassland
- **50%** of acid grassland converted to improved grassland
- Some grassland has also been lost to woodland creation and development of buildings

Heathland (1930 to 2015)

- **57%** decline in heathland sites
- **22%** of heathland converted to conifer plantations
- Fragmentation of heathland into over 100 small sites, impacting the ability of species to disperse and move between areas
- **29%** decrease in the average area of heathland sites
- Note work to restore heathland habitat between 2000-2022 has already reduced fragmentation by **43%**

Wetland (1930 to 2015)

- **63%** decline in wetlands with considerable loss in fen, marsh and swamp

Woodland (1930 to 2015)

- **17%** of broadleaved woodland converted to conifer plantations

Connectivity and fragmentation (1930 to 2000)

- **74%** decline in total area of semi-natural habitat
- **72-94%** decline in average fragment size for semi-natural grassland and heathland, **31%** decline in average size of woodland fragments
- Up to **98%** reduction in connectivity between semi-natural grassland and heathland fragments

Rivers and other surface water bodies (in 2019)

- **18%** of water bodies have good ecological status
- **48%** of water bodies have moderate ecological status
- **25%** of water bodies have poor ecological status
- **9%** of water bodies have bad ecological status

Find the source of this information on page 100 to read more about the impacts of these declines on biodiversity, ecosystem services and the economy.

Some key drivers of these declines in nature have been changes in the way people live over recent decades. This section explains the impacts of these changes, with a broader range of pressures on nature listed in the next section.

Farming and forestry have long been an important part of Dorset's culture and economy, with farmland being the main wildlife habitat in England for thousands of years. The amount of land used for farming in Dorset has remained similar over the years, but there has been significant change in the types of farming practices. Following the 2 world wars of 20th century there was a national drive for self-sufficiency in food and timber production, an unprecedented increase in availability of cheap artificial fertilisers and pesticides, and new machinery and cheap fuel to shift away from hand labour and horsepower. Changes in farming and forestry practices made it easier for many of us to access food and timber, but we now realise many of these practices have contributed to declines in biodiversity and been too disruptive to the natural functioning of ecosystems.

Nature, farming and forestry must continue to go hand in hand. Sustainable farming and forestry practices are needed to reverse declines in biodiversity and ensure ecosystems are functioning to support both food and timber production.

Development is part of modern life, as we build homes, public buildings, offices, factories, and roads, or extract natural resources from quarries and woodlands. As development has increased over recent decades, we have changed many natural areas into man-made surfaces which has disrupted natural processes and introduced more pressures like pollution and disease. But development can be done sustainably, to ensure the natural environment is left in a better state after development than it was before. We can also take steps to increase the amount of natural features and spaces in urban areas.

Climate change is also likely to have contributed to changes or declines in nature, as a result of changing temperatures, rainfall patterns and increases in extreme weather events. These changes and their impacts on nature are likely to increase in the future and must be considered as part of nature recovery.

Wildflowers

Key pressures and opportunities

Pressures on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery

Pressures are all the things impacting the health and functioning of habitats, species and ecosystems.

Opportunities are the ways people can address these pressures by recovering habitats and species, which can also deliver wider environmental benefits.

The pressures and opportunities are summarised below and are listed under the 10 national environmental improvement goals set out in the Environment Act 2021. Many people inputted into this summary and more detail can be found in the Pressure on Nature in Dorset and Opportunities for Recovery supporting document.

Slades Farm

©Janna Bloice

Thriving plants and wildlife

Pressures
Declining biodiversity and bio abundance, habitat loss and fragmentation, poor soil health, air and water pollution and loss of natural features in urban areas all indicate the pressures on nature

Opportunities
Creating a network of naturally functioning diverse habitats, supported by more sustainable land management practices across the county will help plants and wildlife thrive

Clean air

Pressures
Air pollution from transport, industry and agriculture settles on the land and water, disrupting ecosystems by changing the types and abundance of species, reducing resilience and threatening human health

Opportunities
Air quality can be improved by increasing sustainable farming practices, wildlife-friendly gardening and low-emission sustainable transport, plus specific habitat management practices and buffers near busy roads

Clean and plentiful water

Pressures
Human activities can disrupt water ecosystems, by increasing nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediment, altering water flow and changing flood patterns. This can harm wildlife and water quality

Opportunities
Water ecosystems across catchments can be improved by reconnecting rivers to floodplains, restoring wetlands, creating river buffers, practising sustainable farming, upgrading wastewater treatment, and sustainable drainage systems

Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides

Pressures
Chemicals from farming, gardening, human and animal medicines, plastic pollution and road runoff harm wildlife and ecosystem function

Opportunities
Opportunities include reducing chemical use in farming and gardening, reducing the harmful impacts of insecticides in pet treatments, addressing plastic pollution, and monitoring chemicals in waterbodies

Maximise our resources, minimise our waste

Pressures
The extraction, production, and disposal of products from finite natural resources cause habitat loss and environmental harm

Opportunities
Former quarries and landfills can be restored into habitats, creating nature reserves for wildlife and community enjoyment. Plus, all sectors can make changes towards a circular and sustainable economy

Using resources from nature sustainably

Pressures
Food and timber production, and building development, all put pressure on nature and can degrade soil health, fragment habitats and disrupt ecosystem function

Opportunities
Natural resources can be used in ways that support biodiversity, by using sustainable farming and forestry practices, working in collaboration and restoring habitats

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Pressures
Climate change will increase pressure on nature through extreme weather (like flooding and heatwaves), more pests and disease, coastal erosion, and species migration. This will impact how we manage habitats and farmland

Opportunities
Nature's climate resilience can be boosted by diversifying the structure of habitats, using resilient species, and being flexible in management practices. Nature also offers solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation, benefiting people as well

Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards

Pressures
Flooding, drought, wildfires and other environmental hazards can damage habitats and reduce biodiversity, making isolated species more vulnerable to changes in their environments

Opportunities
Resilience can be increased by expanding habitats, creating buffer zones and increasing connectivity. Nature-based solutions can help with flood management, water quality and cooling extreme heat

Enhancing biosecurity

Pressures
Disease and pests kill trees and plants and threaten animal and human health, invasive non-native species outcompete native species and disrupt ecosystem function

Opportunities
Sustainable management practices boost resilience to pests, diseases, and invasive species. Coordinated control and awareness programmes can further reduce or stop their impacts

Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

Pressures
People enjoying natural spaces for recreation or tourism can harm wildlife and habitats, most of the time this is not intentional

Opportunities
Celebrating how people in Dorset are helping nature recover can enable more people to get involved, showing how we can reduce our impact on nature while still enjoying and connecting with the environment

Some key biosecurity pressures in Dorset

Invasive non-native species


Japanese knotweed

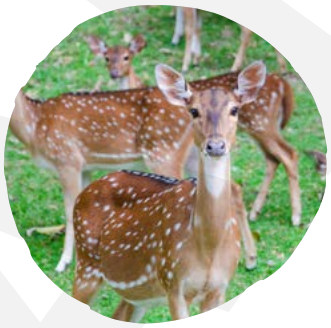

Himalayan balsam


Rhododendron


Signal crayfish


Grey squirrel


Mink


Sika deer


Muntjac deer


Spanish bluebell


Laurel


Gaultheria shallon


Japanese rose


Cotoneaster


Buddleia


Giant hogweed


Snowberry

Some key biosecurity pressures in Dorset

Invasive non-native species


Sour fig


Asian hornet


Common wall lizard


Alpine newt

Diseases


Ash dieback

Ramorum disease


Red band needle blight

Acute oak decline

Swiss needle cast


Bovine tuberculosis


Avian influenza

For more detail on biosecurity pressures, please use resources such as the Non-native Species Secretariat, Forest Research, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Priorities and activities

Setting out our collective priorities and activities

Dorset's 12 nature recovery priorities are shaped by the views of local people and organisations involved in the local nature recovery strategy advisory groups and engagement events.

Nature recovery priorities are the high-level outcomes the strategy is seeking to achieve. Together these priorities focus on achieving a network of nature-rich habitats across Dorset, that help biodiversity and mean the whole ecosystem is functioning, resilient and able to deliver wider environmental benefits.

The priorities are of equal importance and are not listed in any specific order. The numbers are provided solely for ease of reference.

Potential activities are the practical actions that will help achieve the different priorities over the next 10 years. Defra calls these potential measures.

The potential activities are listed under each priority. Next to each activity is a guide to which sector the activity might be most relevant to, but this is just guidance and does not exclude others from getting involved in an activity.

Some activities appear under more than one priority because the same activity will help achieve multiple nature recovery priorities.

Most activities relate to habitats, species or sustainable land management. These activities are practical on the ground actions that will help improve and expand existing habitats, create new habitat, and improve connectivity. Other activities relate to the wider enabling actions needed to support the practical activities on the ground.

The potential activities are not exhaustive as there are many small activities involved in habitat management and restoring ecosystem function.

These activities are not prescriptive but serve as a guide to consider as part of a project or land management planning. The exact mix of activities will depend on what works best for the individual site and people involved in helping nature recover.

The **Local Habitat Map** shows the potential activities in the locations where they can have most benefit for nature recovery and/or provide wider environmental benefits.

The potential activities listed under each priority provide more detail than shown on the Local Habitat Map. For, example, where the map shows 'create or enhance grassland' as the potential activity, this may involve several activities listed under the grassland priority. It is therefore essential that the Local Habitat Map and written part of the strategy are used together.

The strategy and mapped activities provide the starting place, additional expert land management and ecological advice will often support deliver of practical activities on site.

Guide to who the activity may be most relevant to


Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers


Businesses, Industry & Economy


Nature & Environment Sector


Communities & Individuals


Public Bodies


Partnerships & Connectors

Find out more about each priority on the following pages

Priorities and activities

Priority 1 - Grasslands

Increase and enhance grassland across Dorset by creating more species-rich, larger, better-managed, and joined up areas.

The priority is to protect and expand existing species-rich grassland sites, create new sites and ensure they are connected. By increasing the variety and density of grassland species and improving the condition of grassland habitat by more nature-friendly management practices, such as stopping the use of artificial fertilisers and avoiding under or over-grazing.

Grassland habitats are areas where most of the plants are grasses. They are often maintained by people through mowing, drainage, or livestock grazing. **Grassland can be separated into the following types, depending on their biodiversity and management:**

- **improved grasslands** have been changed a lot by people to improve agricultural productivity, or to create amenity grassland for recreation. Changes include applying fertilisers, reseeding and intensive cutting or grazing. They typically have a limited variety of species of grasses and flowering plants, with white clover, perennial ryegrass and other agricultural species usually covering more than 50% of the area.
- **semi-improved grasslands** have undergone some changes through people using fertilisers, herbicides and grazing, but not as much change as improved grasslands and so have a wider diversity of plant species. This is a transitional category between improved and unimproved grasslands.
- **unimproved grasslands** have not been changed through artificial fertilisers, ploughing or reseeding and are therefore species rich. Unimproved grasslands have a high diversity of plant species, with wildflowers and sedge covering more than 30% of the area and less than 10% cover of white clover and perennial ryegrass. It is managed with low-impact practices (like traditional grazing or hay-cutting) and supports high biodiversity, including insects, birds and other wildlife.

The types of grassland that are relevant to this priority are: acid, neutral, calcareous, or marshy. Find more on ways to manage improved grassland in ways that help nature recovery in priority 6 and 7.

Typical grassland species

Field voles

Adder

Bee orchids

Nature recovery in action

The Hogchester Meadows Expansion Project was funded by Dorset National Landscape Partnership through both the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme and National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative, with additional funding from the Hogchester Conservation Trust.

The project's aim was to increase local wildflower seed availability for meadow restoration. Conventional seed harvesting methods were impractical for small, diverse grassland sites (often under 1 hectare). However, the project identified and funded compact equipment to enable accessible seed collection. Volunteers helped sort the seeds, and innovative sorting methods were developed.

Between 2022 and 2024, seed from 17 donor sites has been used to restore 25 hectares across 40 new meadow sites.

Seed harvesting using the brush harvester

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Businesses, Industry & Economy

Nature & Environment Sector

Communities & Individuals

Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity

Protect and sustainably manage the few remaining species-rich grassland sites and increase connectivity between these sites and other nature-rich habitats	
Manage meadows and pastures to support abundant wildflowers and associated wildlife, for example, insects, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles	
Create more species-rich grassland habitats	
Adapt mowing and maintenance regimes in greenspaces, such as parks, sports fields, and grounds of hospitals or businesses, to create connected wild patches and meadows, and areas for insects to overwinter	
Manage road verges using 'cut and collect' to restore and maintain wildflower-rich habitat	
Use rotational grazing of meadows or pasture to divide a field into smaller paddocks and rotate livestock between paddocks. This allows the grass to rest and recover between grazing, provides high-energy forage and often means less chemical inputs are needed	
Reduce the use of chemicals such as pesticides and fertilisers on farmland and gardens	
Encourage diverse sward heights on grassland, with some areas developing into longer tussocks, pockets of scrub and keeping some bare ground to increase diversity and help join up different habitats	

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Potential activity
Make existing species-rich grassland bigger, expanding them to be big enough to protect from external pressures, enhance resilience and encourage natural processes
If improved grassland or arable land is identified as less productive for farming, convert to species-rich grassland
Create species-rich grassland on renewable energy sites
Source local seeds or green hay from existing species-rich grassland (source/arc/donor sites) to restore meadows in other places in Dorset
Enhance and create wildflower arable field margins to help with pest control, pollination, nesting areas for birds, soil health and water management
Enhance and create hedgerows alongside species-rich grassland to help transition between grassland and other habitat types
Create or enhance wood pasture, parkland and/or orchards between species-rich grassland as important connecting habitat
Create and maintain species-rich grassland within woodland tracks, open spaces and at woodland edges
Increase species-richness of semi-improved grassland. For example, by reducing chemical inputs, adding in different native plant species, or using rotational grazing
To enhance acid grassland (former heath), use rotational and conservation grazing to develop a mix of heathland and grassland, thereby increasing habitat and species diversity and helping join up heathland fragments
When creating or enhancing grassland habitats, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land

Priorities and activities

Priority 2 - Woodlands

Dorset's woodland habitats of broadleaved, mixed, wet woodland, and scrub are sustainably managed, resilient, expanded, and better connected.

The priority is to make existing woodland habitats bigger and in better condition through enhanced and informed management and expansion. And to ensure woodland and supporting habitats are well-connected, allowing wildlife to travel between them for food, water, breeding and in response to climate change. Where necessary this may involve creating new areas of wildlife-rich habitat to fill in gaps where small areas of woodland are not well-connected to other areas. Woodland management and new woodland establishment should be consistent with the UK Forest Standard, working to the principle of: 'Right Tree, Right Place, Right Management'.

Habitat restoration and connectivity are most important for Dorset's ancient woodlands that have existed since at least 1600 and long established woodlands that have been present since at least 1893. This includes acting now to begin careful, informed and gradual restoration of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). PAWS were originally ancient woodlands but have more recently been planted with non-native species for commercial purposes.

Sustainable woodland management, known as forestry or silviculture, balances our need for forest products and benefits with the need to keep forests healthy and usable for future generations. There are different types of sustainable woodland management including:

- **regenerative forestry** and low **impact silvicultural systems** (sometimes known as 'continuous cover forestry') delivers benefits for climate, nature and people by taking a whole system approach. These systems increase species and structural diversity, improving resilience and provision of ecosystem services
- **irregular silviculture** is an example of a low impact silviculture system, it involves cutting down selected single or groups of trees, developing an irregular structure of varied sizes, ages and canopies
- **coppice** is another example of regenerative forestry that has a long tradition in Dorset, providing sustainable products and creating a variety of age and canopy structure across a woodland

Typical woodland species

Lesser spotted woodpecker

Tawny owl

Stag beetle

Nature recovery in action

Since 2007, the Cranborne Estate has fundamentally changed the way it manages its woodlands shifting from clear-felling to Irregular Forest Management (also known as Close-to-Nature Forestry). This approach works in harmony with the natural functions of the forest and seeks to maintain and restore a fully functioning forest ecosystem. Individual trees are selectively harvested every 5 to 12 years. The resulting gaps are filled by natural regeneration from the seed of surrounding mature trees. Over time this results in a resilient forest of intimately mixed species and ages with high variability in degrees of canopy openness. The method delivers multiple ecosystem services, including the sustainable production of high-quality timber, and the provision of habitat for a rich and diverse fauna including many species of birds and bats.

Norway spruce plantation

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Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Manage woodland to improve ecological condition, by all woodland managers creating and implementing a woodland management plan that is UK Forestry Standard compliant. Following a management plan helps maximise biodiversity, and wider environmental and economic benefits	
For individual ancient and veteran trees, wood pasture, and parkland, create and implement bespoke management plans	
Protect, enhance and connect the remaining ancient woodland sites and ancient and veteran trees	
Enhance the structure and diversity of existing woodlands, by increasing the variety of ages of trees, canopy structure, and species. As well as retaining and creating open space and standing and fallen deadwood	
Act now to undertake gradual and informed restoration on Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Start by protecting and enhancing existing native woodland features like veteran trees and plants below the trees, then gradually change all the trees to native broadleaf woodland as quickly as is ecologically sensible	
Integrate agroforestry systems on farms and agricultural businesses, this involves growing trees, hedges and shelterbelts on farmland alongside crops and grazing livestock. For example, silvopasture or silvoarable. Increasing trees across the farm landscape can help connect woodlands, boost soil fertility, retain water and provide shade and forage for livestock	
Where restocking existing woodlands, and appropriate to site objectives, use natural regeneration, from existing seed sources to improve the structure and resilience of woodlands	
Expand and buffer native woodlands, using natural colonisation where seed sources are present. Support the development of woodland, scrub and different types of 'woody' mosaic habitats	
In woodlands on acid soils, retain, buffer and connect heathland remnants to support species movement and restoration. Also consider removing conifers, disrupting historic drainage, and developing mire systems with scrub and wet woodland components	
As part of woodland habitat creation or enhancement, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land	

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Potential activity	
Establish new woodlands consistent with the UK Forest Standard, applying the 'right tree, right place' principle. Ideally create new woodland that buffers, expands and links existing woodlands, especially ancient woodlands	
Source and use a diverse range of bio-secure trees and plants for tree and woodland establishment projects. Use a broad and mixed palette suited to objectives. Consider the use of native, near native and non-native species to ensure resilience	
Restore and establish new areas of wood pasture, parkland, and traditional orchards to increase biodiversity and create corridors for species to move between adjacent woodlands. Manage these habitats to maximise diversity of species and structure, for example, restorative pruning, seasonal grazing	
Set up or use a community tree nursery to supply, bio-secure, locally sourced and grown native trees for community tree planting projects	
Enhance and create hedgerows to ensure a diverse mix of tree and hedgerow plants and stagger the management cycle	
Maintain active management of coppice stands and woodlands, and restore lapsed coppice woodlands, bringing these into management, delivering environmental benefits, wood products and economic benefit	
Support the continuation of the hazel coppice industry and related rural industries such as hedge laying, to ensure associated woodland and hedgerow management continues	
Increase the productivity of our native and mixed woodlands, using sustainable practices, to reduce imports of wood products from countries where their production is impacting nature and the environment. Support and develop local woodland related industries, skills and markets	
Where possible implement Minimum Intervention Areas to enable a more natural, unmanaged, woodland structure to evolve, this will benefit wildlife species such as bats	
Maintain and increase street trees to enhance the canopy cover in towns and villages (see priority 6 for more on street trees and urban forests)	

Priorities and activities

Priority 3 - Heathlands

Heathland habitats are better, bigger, and connected, and where there are gaps, more wildlife habitat is created.

The Dorset heaths are some of the biggest remaining areas of internationally important lowland heathland in the UK, including dry and wet heath. This priority reflects Dorset's special responsibility to support the exceptionally high biodiversity of these existing heathland habitats and make them better through reducing damaging recreational pressures and changes to management.

Where possible heathland habitats can be made bigger through expanding them, and more joined up to enable wildlife to travel between them for food, water, breeding and to increase resilience to climate change. Where necessary this may involve creating a range of new habitats to fill in gaps and connect heathlands with other habitat types.

Many fragments of Dorset heaths are near towns and urban areas, so it is also important that heathland is protected from risks like wildfires, pollution, loss of vegetation and damaging recreational use. This can be done through heathland mitigation work that protects heathlands while also enabling development to continue.

Typical heathland species

Nightjar

Dartford warbler

Heath grasshopper

Nature recovery in action

The Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit, covering 1,370 hectares across Hartland Moor, Stoborough Heath and Arne at the heart of the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve, is using domestic livestock to mimic the actions of the large wild herbivores that once shaped and created the habitats that our heathland species need.

Alongside the cattle, ponies, and deer that already graze the heath, woolly Mangalitsa pigs have now been introduced. Pigs dig and root through the soil, creating essential bare patches that foster biodiversity, providing nesting spots for species like ants, and solitary bees and creating space for seeds to germinate where otherwise they might struggle. Dark soil warms up quickly, making ideal basking spots and insects.

Alongside the reintroduction of beavers and the rewetting of peatlands, these projects to restore natural processes are putting the Purbeck Heaths at the forefront of nature recovery in the UK.

Pigs grazing on Purbeck Heath

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Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Protect existing heathland sites, managing them to improve their condition and increase connectivity between fragmented sites	
Manage heathland to have a varied structure of heather and bare ground and to stop the colonisation of invasive plant species. For example, through light extensive grazing, mowing, heather and turf cutting, and some licenced small-scale burns. Burning is often not the most appropriate management method, licencing, consultation and regulations must be followed before burns	
Expand and connect current and potential heathland sites so they are big enough to protect from external pressures and encourage natural process	
Restore dry and wet heath habitats to improve ecosystem function, restoring wet heaths and valley mires alongside dry heaths allows natural hydrological processes to function. In some places this will enable peat formation, which in turn captures and stores carbon	
Manage some open areas in forests, such as heathland, wetland and peatland, to provide a network of habitats for wildlife, connected with existing habitats beyond the woodland site	
Reduce the risk of fires to protect precious heathland habitats and prevent wildfire spreading to nearby homes and communities. For example, raising awareness that it's illegal to barbecue on heathlands or sharing practical advice for people to protect their homes from wildfire	
Reduce pressures from recreational disturbance on heathlands. For example, providing suitable alternative natural greenspaces (SANGs) and raising awareness of ways people can enjoy heathlands responsibly, by continuing the work of Dorset Heaths Partnership	
Managing heathland sites with high levels of air pollution by more frequent heath management, more intensive grazing or soil stripping to take away nutrient rich soil and invasive plants and create bare ground. Continue wider efforts to protect heathlands from air pollution	
Buffer and expand heathland sites by reducing intensive farming on nearby land and consider changing land management practices or heathland restoration on suitable land	
Restore heathland habitat on former minerals and waste sites	
As part of heathland habitat creation or enhancement, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land	

Priorities and activities

Priority 4 - Rivers, lakes and wetlands

Rivers and lakes are naturally functioning, and wetland habitats are better, bigger, and connected to support wildlife and provide clean water and flood protection.

Dorset has rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, as well as wetland habitats including bog, fen, swamp, flush and inundation. Restoration and protection of chalk streams is particularly important as Dorset has a special responsibility for these globally rare habitats. Another important focus is the protection and enhancement of freshwater biodiversity in the Dorset and New Forest Important Freshwater Landscape.

Freshwater habitats need to be enhanced, maintained and restored where they've been lost or disconnected from each other. This doesn't just include the river corridor, but covers the whole water catchment, from individual sections of rivers and lakes to the plants in the riparian corridors, to surrounding wetland habitats. Areas of wetland can also be restored within other habitats to create wet woodland, wet grassland and wet heathland, and small wetland features fed by springs and groundwater seepage. Small wetland features are found where permeable geology overlays impermeable geology (typically Greensand), and often on valley sides above headwater streams. If working near small wetland features, seek specialist advice about their conservation and recovery.

Water needs to be clean to provide a healthy home to wildlife, and for humans to use for recreation and for water supplies to drink and wash in. Clean doesn't just mean the water looks clear, it's about having appropriate nutrient levels and reducing pollution. Rivers must also be cool enough to function well, especially as climate change brings warmer temperatures.

Improvements to rivers, lakes and wetlands can help slow the flow of water across the landscape and provide natural flood management. Natural storage of water in the land will also help create a more sustainable supply of water. This is especially important as climate change will increase the risk of flood and drought.

Typical river, lake and wetland species

Otter

Sea trout

Rounded leaved sundew

Nature recovery in action

Healthy peatlands support fantastically diverse and highly specialised wildlife. However, Dorset's peatlands are fragmented and in poor condition due to historic management. The Dorset Peat Partnership, part of Dorset Catchment Partnerships, is led by Dorset Wildlife Trust and includes 6 other landowning partners. Funding for the partnership comes from Defra's Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, the Wytch Farm Landscape Access and Enhancement Fund and others. **The partnership is restoring 17 peatland sites across Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation over 3 years by:**

- removing some trees where they are drying out peat through transpiration and breaking up peat structure with their roots
- blocking historic drains to rewet peat and stop its degradation
- flailing scrub and tussocky grasses to create conditions for peat-forming sphagnum mosses

Nature recovery outcomes include habitats for important species restored, connected and enlarged, climate risks mitigated - for example reduced impacts of high rainfall, drought and wildfire, and carbon emissions from degraded peat stopped and conditions created to permanently lock in new carbon over time.

Wetland restoration at Greenlands Mire

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 Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity	
Restore and enhance chalk streams and winterbourne streams and the important species they support	
Protect, enhance and connect Dorset's few remaining wetland sites	
Create buffers of different plants, trees and woodlands along the river corridor (riparian planting or water body buffering) to create a diverse structure of shady areas to keep rivers cool and warmer open areas for fish spawning	
Reconnect rivers to their historic floodplain and re-establish dynamic wetland habitats	
Create or restore areas of wetland within existing woodland, heathland or grassland	
Carry out river restoration. For example, re-meander rivers that have been straightened to allow the water to take a natural path or put natural materials into the river channel to slow the flow of water (leaky dams)	
Use sustainable farming practices that improve soil structure to reduce runoff and improve soil health, for example cover crops, no till and agroforestry	
Reduce the use of chemicals in farming, gardening and veterinary medicines. This includes pesticides used to treat external parasites on domestic pets (as these often end up contaminating water bodies)	
Create buffer strips near waterbodies on farms, especially headwater streams. Buffer zones help reduce runoff of sediment and chemicals into the water, prevent livestock destabilising the riverbanks, and connect habitats in rivers and on land	
Create, restore or protect priority ponds and adjacent habitats to provide homes for rare and endangered species	
Use an ecosystem-based fisheries management approach and sustainable aquaculture practices	
Remove man-made barriers in rivers that restrict fish movement or provide ways to swim around them. This in turn could lead to restoration of much larger areas of habitat that were lost due to the barrier. This may require coordination with multiple organisations and relevant permissions to be in place	

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Potential activity
Restore and 're-wet' peatlands to provide wildlife habitat and act as sponges that filter water to improve water quality, regulate water flow, increase flood protection and improve carbon storage
Introduce mixed age cyclical reed cutting into reedbed management plans where possible, creating mixed age reed stands and enhancing habitats. Explore the potential to use materials from reedbed management to supply bioenergy, or once water quality improves, the thatching industry to help reduce its carbon footprint
Use permeable materials if creating hard surfaces in urban areas, such as driveways, to direct rainwater into soakaways and back into the ground rather than the wastewater system. Limit use of sealed surfaces like concrete and artificial grass that water runs over quickly and into drains
Use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in towns and villages, such as rain gardens, swales, street trees and ponds to slow and clean water, and provide wetland or boggy habitat
Reduce the risk of prescription medication reaching and polluting waterways, by taking medications according to prescription and using pharmacies to dispose of any medications that are no longer required
Improve maintenance of septic tanks and sewage treatment works to reduce pollution reaching waterbodies
Consider the role of beavers in maintaining and creating wetlands, follow all licencing procedures for beaver releases and plan the management of potential impacts on infrastructure, livelihoods and buildings
Support communities where free-living beavers are present through the Dorset Beaver Management Group by providing advice on management requirements in response to beaver activity
Reduce the volume of water abstraction from the chalk aquifer, to support nature recovery of chalk streams

Priorities and activities

Priority 5 - Coastal

The coastal strip is enhanced and restored to safeguard key habitats that protect rare and vulnerable species and space is created for coastal retreat as habitat is lost to erosion and sea level rise.

Dorset's coastal habitats include cliffs, rocky shore, saltmarsh, sand dunes, shingle and sandy beaches, intertidal habitat and seagrass meadows. The priority is to restore coastal habitats to good condition, allow dynamic processes to take place and buffer from future pressures such as erosion, sea level rise, tourism, recreation and industry. The coastal strip should be protected and enhanced to safeguard the important species and ecosystems that depend on it. Restoration of historical coastal habitats, such as oyster reefs, that were destroyed by over exploitation a long time ago is particularly important.

Poole, Christchurch, Portland, Weymouth harbours and The Fleet are significant water bodies hosting wide assemblages of biodiversity in their mudflats, saltmarsh and shallow waters. Protection and recovery of nature in these harbours is closely linked to nature's recovery along the river catchments that flow into them. Opportunities through flood defence and coastal work should ensure nature recovery is embedded in any design or works from the start.

Typical coastal species


Peregrine falcon


Kelp


Limpet

Nature recovery in action

The Environment Agency, RSPB and Natural England are working together to adapt approximately 150 hectares of the Moors at Arne into a diverse wetland habitat. With sea levels rising, important habitat for wildlife all around Poole Harbour could be lost over the next 30 years. Where rising waters press against fixed sea defences 'coastal squeeze' occurs, this means a loss of inter-tidal features such as mudflats and salt marsh. New places for coastal wildlife will need to be created to keep the natural features of the lost landscape, whilst flood risk to homes and businesses from the sea continues to be managed.

The Moors at Arne project

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Potential activity	
Reduce nutrients entering coastal waters through changes to farming practices, development and wastewater treatment	
Reduce pressures from recreational disturbance, for example, helping water sport users understand how to enjoy the coast without disrupting sensitive habitats and species	
Create new areas of intertidal habitats such as salt marsh and mudflats in response to sea levels rising against fixed flood and coastal erosion defences (coastal squeeze)	
Design habitat creation into flood defence and other coastal engineering works, for example, artificial reefs, rockpools and sand dunes	
Create new coastal habitats inland as part of managed realignment to accommodate and compensate for the expected shift of coastal systems towards the land as sea levels rise	
For coastal areas with high numbers of people visiting, use a mixture of methods to make more space for wildlife, such as changing access patterns to give wildlife more space, or creating areas for wildlife on nearby land that will be less disturbed, for example, ground nesting habitat for birds on adjacent undisturbed fields	
Seek to restore lost coastal habitats such as seagrass beds, oyster reefs, saltmarsh and sand dunes, as improvements in underlying environmental conditions allow	
Pull back from intensive farming in fields close to cliff edges, to create space for cliff top habitats and wildlife to survive and move as the coastline recedes through cliff falls and landslips	

Priorities and activities

Priority 6 - Urban

Our towns and villages have increased nature-rich spaces, so wildlife can travel between buildings, roads, parks, gardens and the wider countryside.

This priority is to make more nature-rich spaces in our towns and villages, to provide wildlife habitat between buildings and roads. This can be achieved through various actions such as changing how we manage gardens and recreation spaces like parks and golf courses or including more street trees and natural drainage.

Connecting urban nature areas with wilder natural habitats in the countryside not only supports wildlife but also enhances our interaction with nature. Increasing connection with nature can benefit people's mental and physical health and help address inequalities.

Spending time enjoying natural spaces or being surrounded by natural features like green walls and ponds provides direct health benefits. Whilst increasing space for nature near our homes and communities can provide indirect health benefits such as protection from air or water pollution, shading from extreme heat, flood protection, climate adaptation, job creation and increased economic activity.

Typical urban species

Hedgehog

Slow worm

Common frog

Nature recovery in action

Wildlife garden at Kinson Recreation Ground: Kinson recreation ground is 3 hectares of urban park with short cut amenity grass and no trees or hedges on site. An underused corner of the site has been transformed from a green desert into a wildlife-rich site, now featuring a pond, meadow, fruit trees, hedges, along with sunny banks and rocky habitats. There is seating and an information board inviting people to pause, relax, and connect with nature.

This project, funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in 2022 and delivered by The Parks Foundation who are a charity improving BCP's parks, is part of the BCP Nature Recovery Network. It aims to enhance habitat and biodiversity, engage communities, and improve the appearance of 8 urban parks within some of BCP Council's most densely populated and disadvantaged wards.

The work at Kinson Recreation ground was supported by local volunteers and residents who got involved in the practical work and are now helping to look after the green space. Other parks involved in this nature recovery initiative include Branksome Recreation Ground, Haskell's Recreation Ground, Jumpers Common, Kinson Manor Playing Fields, Muscliff Park, Pelhams Park, and Slade's Farm.

Kinson recreation ground

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Potential activity

Use wildlife-friendly gardening practices in homes, businesses, community growing projects, churchyards and similar spaces
Adapt mowing and maintenance regimes in green spaces such as parks, sports fields, and grounds of hospitals, schools or businesses. Create wild patches and meadows, and areas for insects to overwinter
Create sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) features in towns and villages, such as rain gardens, swales, street trees and ponds to slow water and provide wetland or boggy habitat
Increase other kinds of urban greening such as living walls and green roofs, on both existing and new buildings, or other infrastructure such as bus shelters
Create more nature-rich spaces in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities. For example, gardens or allotments for students to grow plants and food, and wildflower strips around sports fields
Create more nature-rich spaces on golf courses, or consider changing land-use where these facilities are underused or provided for people to enjoy elsewhere
Sustainably manage existing trees in towns and villages, replacing these where they are removed or lost due to age or disease
Increase tree canopy cover by establishing and maintaining more trees in gardens, parks, and along streets, focusing on areas that have the lowest tree equity scores. For Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, follow the guiding principles outlined in BCP Urban Forest Strategy
In new developments, keep as many existing trees on site as possible and if trees are lost, carry out new tree planting, with numbers greater than those removed. Favour local and native species, or new species that provide a similar ecological function if more resilient or suited to the urban environment
Maintain and establish new fruit trees and orchards within public spaces. And establish related community groups and ways for people to use the fruit and care for the trees
Create dead wood habitats such as standing dead wood, log piles and dead hedges to provide homes for wildlife, using locally sourced material
Explore the suitability of newer methods of creating woodland. For example, the Miyawaki method involves planting a large number of seedlings at once, to replicate natural regeneration as the fastest growing saplings will thin out the rest

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Potential activity
Increase the use of hedges, rather than just fences and walls, around homes, gardens, and public open spaces
Continue and expand Dorset's successful 'cut and collect' approach to road verge management, to restore and maintain wildflower-rich habitat
Manage verges, hedgerows and trees alongside road and rail infrastructure to create wildlife corridors and consider installing green crossings to reduce habitat fragmentation
Explore opportunities to convert underused streets or neglected areas into small 'pocket parks'
Use permeable materials if creating hard surfaces in urban areas, such as driveways, to direct rainwater into soakaways that flow back down into the ground instead of the wastewater system and therefore reduce flood risk. Limit use of sealed surfaces like concrete and artificial grass that water runs over quickly, flowing into drains and the wastewater system
Use water butts to catch rainwater and use this to water plants during drier months. This water is good for the garden as it's rich in nutrients and helps conserve drinking water
Increase natural darkness by using timers and movement sensors on household and street lighting, to reduce light pollution that disturbs the natural rhythms of wildlife, for example, bats, birds, insects. Choose lights that are not too bright and warmer shades, then position the lights as low as possible and pointing downwards rather than into the sky
Make nature recovery a key consideration in development, following policy and guidance on biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure, urban greening, sustainable drainage systems (SuDs), sustainable/active travel, landscape character, suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANGs), and habitat restoration on minerals and waste sites
Include species enhancements in the design of new buildings and developments. For example, bird and bat boxes/bricks, bee bricks, hedgehog highways
Consider and mitigate impacts on bats and birds before starting any renovation or repair works on buildings or structures, so that species can continue using the site once the works are complete
Support initiatives for communities to take care of nature spaces near to homes and community buildings
Protect and enhance green corridors that connect up nature areas to help wildlife travel through towns, and often provide trails for people to travel along too

Priorities and activities

Priority 7 - Farming

Sustainable farming practices are widely adopted to produce good quality food in harmony with nature.

Sustainable farming practices include many different approaches to farming that aim to reduce environmental impacts and increase environmental benefits. How farmland is managed impacts the diversity and abundance of wildlife it provides space for, and how easily wildlife can move across the landscape between areas of nature-rich habitat.

Sustainable farming practices minimise the impact of farming on habitats and ecosystem functioning, with a focus on soil health, water quality, increasing diversity, minimising chemical use and improving habitat connectivity. As well as there being variation in the different methods and approaches, there is also variety in how we refer to sustainable farming practices, including:

- agroecology
- organic farming
- high nature status farming
- regenerative farming
- permaculture
- biodynamic farming
- nature-friendly farming

Sustainable farming practices need to be both economically and environmentally sustainable, providing good quality local food, local jobs, profit for the farmer, and an increased abundance and diversity of wildlife and habitats.

Typical farming species

Nature recovery in action

George and Dougal Hosford manage 800 rented hectares at Traveller's Rest Farm near Blandford. They have been gradually transitioning to regenerative farming since giving up ploughing 20 years ago. The farm includes species rich, unimproved and improved grasslands. A herd of pasture-reared beef cows is considered critical to the sustainable management of both grassland and 650 hectares of arable crops.

The farm focuses on sustainable practices whilst at the same time maintaining financial resilience. Soil health is a priority, and a gradual reduction in the use of synthetic chemical and fertiliser inputs, combined with a more biological approach, is supporting both biodiversity and crop yields. Seventy-four hectares of strategically placed wildflower margins and plots form the basis for a system of integrated pest control, encouraging beneficial predatory insects to control common pest species as an alternative to insecticides. These areas benefit pollinators and a wide range of insects.

To prevent grasses from overwhelming the wildflowers, they mow and remove the cuttings most autumns, turning them into hay for their cows or compost for the soil. A return to hay making has eliminated the use of plastic bale wrap. Direct drilling has replaced minimal till crop establishment. With the decrease in synthetic inputs and soil disturbance, general life in the soil has noticeably increased. This and other management have led to a significant increase in numbers of skylark, woodlark, cornbunting, yellowhammers, linnets, finches, starlings and many other birds.

Diversity is key. A wide range of crops is being grown, sometimes 2 crops are grown at the same time (bicropping) with very low inputs. The increase in insect life in these fields is noticeable. As passionate stewards of the land, the Hosfords also harvest and sow their own native seed mixes, recognising their ecological value and adaptability. They are motivated by a belief in fostering balance in their farm ecosystem and see food and nature going hand in hand.

Pasture-reared beef cows

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Potential activity	
Increase the use of mixed farming and the diversity in crops, livestock and wildlife. For example, having a mix of grazing livestock and crops, improving crop rotations and increasing structural and species diversity of plants, trees and hedgerows on farm	
Review and increase understanding of current chemical use on farm, create and follow a management plan to minimise amounts used and losses into the wider environment beyond the farm	
Reduce or stop chemical use such as fertilisers, pesticides and some veterinary medicines for livestock that persist in livestock dung	
Adopt farming practices that support soil health for example by reducing the frequency and depth of tillage, avoiding leaving soil bare by using under sowing, cover and catch crops, keeping living roots in the soil, feeding the soil with plant residues, compost and manure	
Work with neighbours to take an integrated approach to managing cross-holding features such as hedges, buffer strips, margins, water courses and slopes	
Work with neighbouring farms and other partners to coordinate nature recovery activities across the landscape and share equipment and knowledge. For example, by joining a farmer cluster or landscape scale recovery project	
Create, maintain and enhance a variety of habitats for a broad range of wildlife during different stages of their lifecycle and different seasons of the year, for example, areas planted for birds or pollinators	
Plan where wildlife habitats are created or enhanced across the farm so that they provide corridors or stepping stones that join up with other habitats, to allow wildlife to travel across the farm and wider landscape	
Support young and adult populations of pollinating insects that are critical to pollinating wildflowers and crops. For example, maintain flower-rich grass margins, blocks or in-field strips, and reduce chemical use	
As part of habitat creation or enhancement, keep existing wet features like depressions or re-wet historically wet areas of the land	

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Potential activity

Consider growing perennial energy crops on less productive land, rather than annual short rotation energy crops, to deliver benefits for soil health and space for wildlife	
Explore options for cross-catchment trading of slurry and manure, to move excess nutrients from livestock farms over to arable farms where it can replace artificial fertiliser	
Conserve and enhance populations of wildlife with strong associations to farmland, including arable specialists, such as corn bunting and brown hare, and grassland specialists, such as starling and harvest mouse	
Use integrated pest management, for example, beetle banks	
Use a range of grazing practices and breeds, suited to the type of habitat or land-use. For example, conservation grazing to maintain semi-natural habitats, or rotational grazing on pasture	
Reduce farm plastic use and join a plastic recycling scheme	
Maintain or introduce in-field trees or agroforestry systems on farms, this involves growing trees, hedges and shelterbelts on farmland alongside crops and grazing livestock. For example, silvopasture or silvoarable. Increasing trees across the farmed landscape can help connect woodlands, boost soil fertility, retain water and provide shade and forage for livestock	
Enhance, create and manage hedgerows as important wildlife corridors between farmland and other habitats, including a diversity of hedgerow trees	
Create buffer strips near waterbodies on farms to reduce runoff, prevent livestock destabilising the riverbanks, and connect habitats in rivers and on land	
Manage habitats to provide biodiversity net gain units or nutrient mitigation credits	
Support initiatives that improve marketing of local sustainably produced food, and help connect farmers and consumers	
Support farmers and land managers to work together to enable efficient woodland management, sale of timber wood products and best practice on management and biosecurity	

Priorities and activities

Priority 8 - Natural processes

Natural process-led conservation approaches are used more widely to support functioning ecosystems and shape an ever-changing landscape.

This priority is about focusing on restoring natural processes as the end goal, rather than a specific habitat or mosaic of habitats. Properly functioning natural processes will result in more dynamic habitats, which many wildlife species will benefit from, and will allow transition zones to develop as one habitat changes into another. This is known as a kaleidoscope model, as opposed to a mosaic model of fixed habitat patches in the landscape. Enabling this landscape change is likely to require larger areas and sufficient time to work effectively, and some species may still require targeted interventions.

Nature recovery in action

The Wild Woodbury Nature Recovery Project at Bere Regis is an innovative conservation initiative led by Dorset Wildlife Trust, aimed at transforming former agricultural land into a thriving wildlife habitat.

Spanning over 150 hectares, this area focuses on rewilding by restoring natural processes, enhancing biodiversity, and creating a mosaic of different habitats including woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands. One of the natural processes in this project is using domestic cattle, ponies and pigs to graze the land to copy the natural grazing patterns of extinct wild animals.

By allowing nature to take the lead, the site encourages the return of native species such as birds, insects and other wildlife, fostering a more resilient ecosystem. The project also engages the local community, offering opportunities for education and involvement in habitat restoration and sustainable land management practices.

Wild Woodbury represents a significant step in tackling biodiversity loss while addressing climate change through nature-based solutions.

Wild Woodbury

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Potential activity	
Allow water to flow naturally across the landscape, for example, re-meander straightened rivers, stage zero river restoration, restore small flushes and ponds, and recreate wet areas within other habitats like grassland, woodland and heathland	
Allow trees and woodlands to establish through natural colonisation where seed sources are present or through succession, rather than planting	
Using an integrated pest management approach with grazing animals, for example, allow dung beetles to help tackle parasites and fertilise and aerate the soil	
Use informed naturalistic or rotational grazing management to mimic natural grazing patterns of wild herbivores	
Use browsing animals, that eat woody vegetation rather than grass, to positively impact woodland ecological condition and ensure a mixture of woodland canopy, scrub and open habitats across landscapes	
Ensure the grazing pressures of endemic deer and introduced livestock are balanced, delivering the ecological improvement of woodland, scrub and open habitats	
Rewild some areas to enable the mass recovery of ecosystems	

Priorities and activities

Priority 9 - Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions are used as the first choice to address wider environmental issues, such as flooding, climate change and pollution.

Nature gives us what we need to survive. The priority is to use nature as the solution when responding to a range of environmental and social issues, so that we invest in nature rather than built infrastructure which in turn will help ensure a more abundant, diverse and connected natural environment. Nature-based solutions are actions which sustainably use nature to provide environmental, economic or societal benefits and ecosystem services, while also helping enhance or restore the natural assets and ecosystems.

Working with nature and natural processes and not against it, must become a key part of delivering on issues that widely affect communities in Dorset such as flooding, water quality, carbon storage and extreme temperatures.

Nature recovery in action

Wessex Water has implemented nature-based solutions in Dorset, particularly in the Poole Harbour Catchment, to reduce levels of nitrate leaching into the groundwater to protect public water supplies. This work has focused on reducing agricultural runoff and improving water quality in the Poole Harbour area. Wessex Water worked with farmers to promote natural practices like planting buffer strips, encouraging the use of cover crops to reduce bare ground over the winter and providing advice to land managers on options available.

Through this approach they have collaboratively reduced nitrate leaching by over 60 tonnes of nitrogen in 2022-23, and since 2020 delivered over 80 hectares of habitat improvements.

Along the River Stour they are restoring natural riverbanks and floodplains which enhance the river's ability to manage floods while also creating habitats for fish, birds and other species. This has included the use of riparian buffers and wetlands to capture phosphorus rich soil runoff from entering the Stour and its tributaries. These wetlands and woodlands provide important habitats for wildlife, help reduce nutrient pollution, and help to manage flood risks by absorbing excess rainwater.

Leaky dam

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Potential activity

Establish and maintain more native trees in towns and villages to improve air quality, provide shade from extreme heat, increase carbon storage, improve water quality and provide natural flood management. Increase tree canopy cover in all urban areas, especially areas that have the lowest tree equity scores
Follow a natural flood management (NFM) approach to protect, restore and emulate the natural functions of catchments, floodplains, rivers and the coast
Create or restore wet habitats in floodplains to help store flood water and catch nutrients and sediment before they enter rivers. These areas can also provide healthy food for livestock to graze during drier weather, and become havens for pollinators and other wildlife. Beavers can be part of the process of creating expanded wetland habitats
Use farming practices that focus on soil health, structure and maximising carbon and water storage. Farming for soil health helps reduce runoff and slow the flow of water through the catchment to reduce flood risk and improve water quality. Healthy soils also sequester carbon to help address climate change and help food production by smoothing out the flood-drought fluctuations and extending the grazing/growing periods
Use permeable materials if creating hard surfaces in urban areas, such as driveways, and limit use of sealed surfaces like concrete and artificial grass that water quickly runs over into drains. By redirecting water into natural soakaways, rather than the wastewater system, can help reduce flood risk and reduce the number of storm overflow discharges
Use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in towns and villages, such as rain gardens, swales, street trees and ponds to slow and clean water, and provide wetland or boggy habitat. This can help reduce flood risk and reduce the number of storm overflow discharges
Maintain and increase green social prescribing, supporting people to take part in nature-based activities that can help improve health and wellbeing

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Potential activity
Enhance and create habitats to help mitigate climate change, natural habitats capture and store carbon. Peatland, broadleaved woodland and saltmarsh are examples of habitats that tend to be larger carbon stores, but many other habitat types provide some carbon storage, and a variety of habitats is needed for a functioning ecosystem
Create wetlands to provide final treatment of wastewater before this recycled water is safely returned back into the environment.
Create wetlands to treat discharges of untreated sewage from storm overflows before they are released into rivers and waterways
Enhance and create hedgerows that slow the flow of water across the landscape, which helps reduce flood risk and improve water quality by reducing the amount of sediment and pollution in rivers. Hedges are also a carbon store, as well as providing wildlife habitats and corridors
Include fire defendable lines, ponds and emergency service access routes within heathland to reduce wildfire risk, increase the ability to contain fires, and improve resilience to climate change
Increase tree, hedge and/or wood pasture on farms to provide shade for livestock from extreme heat and slow the flow of water to improve flood protection and water quality
Restore species-rich grassland to boost soil health, protect against erosion and store carbon
Create wetlands to treat discharges of untreated sewage from storm overflows before they are released into rivers and waterways
Embed the importance of nature recovery across all organisations so that senior decision-makers champion nature and consider nature-based solutions as part of decision making

Priorities and activities

Priority 10 - Nature connection

More people are informed on nature recovery in Dorset and are actively doing something to make space for nature.

Nature recovery needs to be at the heart of every community, with collective action bringing the biggest gains. More people knowing, loving, appreciating and doing something for nature will lead to more nature positive behaviours. A thriving nature-based local economy can also help boost local employment and incomes. Each person, business, organisation, landowner, farmer, school, group is part of the solution to make nature more abundant, connected and resilient in Dorset. This strategy is the people of Dorset's strategy and provides the different priorities, activities and information needed to recover nature across the county. And in turn help strengthen the links between our natural environment, economy, jobs and health.

One way people can support nature recovery is through Nature Recovery Dorset, an initiative collectively created to help bring together and drive forward local action for nature. Nature Recovery Dorset celebrates what's already being done for nature, shows where there are opportunities to do more, and encourages collaboration.

Nature recovery in action

Planet Purbeck is a community-led organisation working to protect and enhance nature in Purbeck, by bringing communities together and ensuring nature recovery delivers benefits to improve people's everyday lives.

Working together with landowners, activity providers, community groups and charities, they've launched Purbeck Goes Wild to make sure every Purbeck child and young person is offered opportunities to get out and about in nature. From school gardening clubs and free school trips to nature hotspots, family outdoor activities and opportunities to help with practical nature conservation tasks.

Young people connecting more with nature may become ambassadors for protecting the natural environment or gain skills to progress with careers in conservation and outdoor sectors.

Image from the film Let's Go Wild

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Potential activity	
Showcase and champion the huge range of activities already happening for nature recovery in Dorset, and celebrate the people involved to help inspire others	
Continue and grow Dorset's strong history of partnership working. For example, farm clusters, catchment based approach, and landscape recovery projects. Use this strategy as a tool to help target collaborative efforts, working together across sectors by listening without judgement, sharing knowledge and pooling resources	
Share advice to help develop and implement a land management plan, if one is not already in place. For example, for farmers, landowner, land managers, community groups, town and parish councils, schools	
Support rural skills development and rural workers to strengthen the nature-based local economy. For example, business hubs, affordable housing tied to local forestry or agriculture, promoting sustainable tourism and linking with the outdoor activity sector	
Host farmer or forester led events to learn more about sustainable practices	
Include sustainable farming, sustainable forestry and land management and conservation courses in local college curriculum	
Share successes and learning from trailblazing transformational landscape scale projects and enhance the collective efforts of farmers and landowners	
Support local farmers, landowners and land managers in their asks to government regarding support for sustainable farming or forestry practices	
Use public sector resources to carry out nature recovery projects as demonstrators (for example, nutrient mitigation or county farms), then champion the private sector to drive delivery	

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Potential activity
Work with architects, builders and roofers to raise awareness of potential impacts of development on wildlife and the benefits of seeking ecological advice early in the design process
Provide training to landscape architects and grounds maintenance teams on wildlife-friendly gardening practices
Provide guidance to help developers consider sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) at an early stage of design and planning, and how these can provide multiple benefits for water quality and biodiversity
Show how businesses can deliver nature recovery actions at different scales. For example, Sustainable Business Network, BCP Council Nature Pledge. Celebrate stories of businesses whose success is based on working in harmony with a healthy natural environment
Collaborate with recording groups and citizen scientists to explore how they can help measure progress and promote opportunities for more people to get involved, from annual wildlife count days to regular wildlife monitoring groups
Share information on what people can do to help wildlife at home. For example, Dorset Wildlife Trust's wildlife-friendly spaces award, BCP Council's Nature Pledge
Support communities to understand and celebrate any changes happening through habitat restoration. For example, information signs on footpaths and near projects, or volunteer days
Raise awareness of ways people can enjoy nature, while minimising pressures this can put on wildlife. For example, Dorset Dogs
Make more space for nature nearby people's homes, especially in areas where it is estimated 30% or less of the population live within a 300m walk of nature

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Potential activity

Continue the work of the Partnership Against Rural Crime to raise awareness of what a wildlife crime is and how to report it	
Build on existing provision of nature related activities in nurseries, schools, colleges and youth clubs. For example, increase forest school for all students, assembly packs for eco clubs to deliver, trips to natural spaces and farms, on-site growing of food, plants and trees, resources for educators to embed nature recovery themes across all lessons/subjects, geo-caching	
Continue and expand the variety of nature-related activities in communities across Dorset, giving more time for people to connect with nature or get involved in nature conservation. For example, community gardening, pond-dipping experiences, natural arts and crafts, mindfulness sessions, outdoor physical activities	
Maintain and increase green social prescribing, supporting people to take part in nature-based activities that can help improve health and wellbeing, meet a diverse range of needs, and foster nature connectedness	
Acquire long-term funding to support project development, capital investment and ongoing maintenance of interventions	
Raise awareness of new funding for nature recovery activities and increase support to access funding where needed, for example, farm advisors, community fund finder	
Provide a clear approach for monitoring and reporting, so everyone can understand what 'good' looks like for different habitat types and species, and how to report on their activities to help track progress	
Maintain centralised mapping service where local people can view information about habitats, opportunities for nature recovery, and completed projects. Make more space for nature nearby people's homes, especially in areas where it is estimated 30% or less of the population live within a 300m walk of nature	

Priorities and activities

Priority 11 - Species abundance and diversity

Abundance and diversity of local species increases so that sustainable populations are reached and maintained, while invasive non-native species are controlled.

This priority is about giving all wildlife opportunities to thrive, by creating a network of diverse, naturally functioning and joined up grassland, woodland, wetland, heathland and coastal habitats across the county, supported by more nature-friendly land management practices across all the surrounding farmland, towns and villages. This will be achieved by combining potential activities listed under a number of the priorities.

Species abundance is how many individuals of a species are in an area, for example the number of pyramidal orchids in a 1m by 1m section of a meadow. Species richness is how many different species there are in an area, for example the other grasses, flowers and wildlife alongside the orchids. Together, more abundance and richness contribute to more species diversity. Rather than just aiming for high numbers, the focus of this priority is on species having big enough populations to be maintained over the long term to help the ecosystem function. Without enough overall wildlife (biomass) then there is a risk that food chains will collapse.

As well as increasing local species diversity, there is a need to reduce or remove invasive non-native species whose presence is a common threat to native wildlife and the habitats covered by the other priorities.

This priority focuses on supporting habitats and their species to be resilient to pests, disease, and ongoing changes in our climate, acknowledging that some species will reduce or move away, and some new species will arrive from other areas, attracted by the changed climatic conditions.

Some land management activities benefit some species more than others, as part of planning activities it is important to consider if the intended outcome is to increase overall species diversity or abundance, or to support a specific species.

Nature recovery in action

A project to control Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed was carried out in the River Axe catchment.

Himalayan balsam is considered problematic and invasive as it outcompetes native plants, provides poor soil stabilisation due to its shallow roots, can alter water flows on rivers, and spreads rapidly. It responds strongly to nutrient availability and therefore can be a problem near farmland and water courses where nutrient input is often higher.

Working with Natural England, the Dorset based European Conservation Action Network (EuCAN) volunteers worked alongside contractors over a 5-year period to tackle the invasive species problem on the main River Axe.

The giant hogweed was dealt with by contractors removing the flower and seed heads offsite in heavy-duty plastic sacks for disposal by incineration. The Japanese knotweed was tackled by contractors using one application of a glyphosate-based herbicide in September and the Himalayan balsam was removed through pulling, cutting, strimming, and brush cutting by both volunteers and contractors.

This work initially led to a reduction in Himalayan balsam, but, as soon as the funding stopped the problem returned. This example illustrates why it's important to prevent invasive non-native species at source, because efforts to control them can be expensive and are required long-term.

Volunteers clearing Himalayan Balsam

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Potential activity

Create a network of naturally functioning diverse habitats across the county, supported by more nature-friendly land management practices across all the surrounding areas by delivering the activities listed under all the other priorities in this strategy
Make simple changes across Dorset to help increase species abundance, such as herbal leys and diverse seed mixes on farms, encouraging natural regeneration of woodlands, and leaving wilder areas in parks and open spaces
Use integrated pest management on farms to reduce the amount of chemicals used and improve soil health. For example, beetle banks on arable farms provide habitat for beneficial insects that feed on crop pests. Similarly, increasing species diversity in pasture and using rotational livestock grazing can support dung beetles, which help with parasite control. This can also reduce the need for parasite treatments that can harm bats, invertebrates and other species
Use wildlife-friendly gardening practices. For example, peat-free compost, hedgehog house, not using chemicals or slug pellets
Use local and native species when creating new spaces for nature as part of building development, but also consider new species where these provide a similar ecological function and are suited to the built environment
Undertake targeted and sustained control of non-native and invasive plants and animals, for example, rhododendron, Himalayan balsam, snowberry, sour fig, cotoneaster, Japanese rose, giant hogweed and mink
Coordinate landscape scale management of sustainable deer populations to improve the ecological condition of semi-natural habitats, supporting the natural regeneration of trees, woody shrubs and ground flora, and to protect agricultural crops. Control muntjac deer (as a non-native invasive species). Within both Wareham and Purbeck focus management actions upon sika deer populations
Monitor tree stocks for pests and disease, and where impacts are high, adapt woodland management plans and practices to respond
Coordinate shared approach to respond to ash dieback across land ownership boundaries

Farmers, Foresters, Landowners & Land Managers

Businesses, Industry & Economy

Nature & Environment Sector

Communities & Individuals

Public bodies

Partnerships & Connectors

Potential activity
If plants or trees are lost to disease, re-plant with more resistant species but make sure these perform similar ecological functions and are native if possible
Explore options for landscape scale management of grey squirrel populations and deliver this to improve ecological condition of woodlands and reduce pressures on other animals, such as mammals and birds. Include an evaluation of the feasibility for pine marten reintroduction
Use badger surveillance and vaccination as part of the new TB eradication strategy
Stop the spread of common wall lizard into new areas, particularly heathland. Raise awareness of how to identify the species and what people should do if found. Carry out surveys of new or spreading populations, to control before they become established
Control Alpine newt, survey populations and stop their spread into new areas. Raise awareness of what people should do if they spot them and how to avoid accidentally helping them spread
Raise awareness of how to quickly identify areas with newly colonised sour fig and rapidly control and remove the species to prevent it spreading
When managing and restoring habitats, be aware that climate change may make conditions suitable for different species, and that may have knock-on impacts on other species and processes in complex and dynamic ecosystems
Use native plant and tree species to support the local food web and wildlife, but also support the use of new species and varieties where these enhance ecological function and resilience to pests, diseases, climate change and extreme weather
Ensure diversity in age, species and structure of the habitat to help species adapt to climate-related pressures and/or disperse to new areas
Increase connectivity between habitats to enable species to move in response to new climate pressures
Raise awareness of species that might arrive in Dorset due to climate change or reintroduction projects to help people recognise them, understand why they have arrived and the potential benefits they might bring

Priorities and activities

Priority 12 - Priority species

Dorset's priority species needing bespoke conservation action are supported and sustained.

Making more space for nature across the landscape will lead to an increase in the abundance and diversity of wildlife across Dorset. However, some species need bespoke action to enable their numbers to recover, increase and be sustained.

To identify which species should be on this priority list, a group was formed with experts representing amphibians and reptiles, birds, fish, fungi, invertebrates, lichens, mammals and plants.

The group followed a process set out by Defra:

- create a longlist of almost 1,000 species that are characteristic of Dorset, at high risk of extinction or otherwise locally significant
- select the 54 priority species from the longlist by identifying species requiring bespoke activities, and considering factors such as urgency, feasibility, climate change and existing work

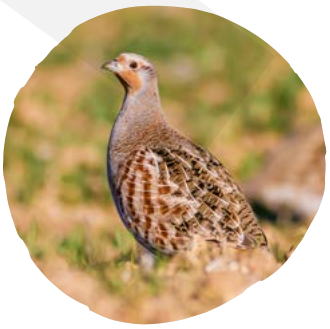
The priority species are listed on the following pages, there are 73 individual species but some have been grouped into assemblages where they require the same bespoke activities to reduce the list to 54. The potential activities for each species can be found in the Species Recovery supporting document, which also includes details on the methodology, who was involved, and what species are on the long list.

For the first section of the priority list the ambition is to reverse declines, for the second section of the list the ambition is to explore the potential for conservation translocation. It may not be possible to recover or reintroduce some of the priority species within the lifetime of the local nature recovery strategy, instead the potential activities for some species focus on better understanding evidence, risks, local views and deliverability.

Atlantic puffin

Barn owl

Crane


Grey partridge

Common tern

Little tern


Sandwich tern

Ringed plover

Stone-curlew

Swift


Hazel dormouse

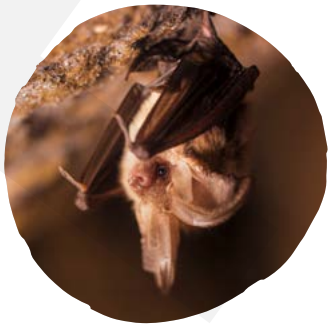

Grey long-eared bat

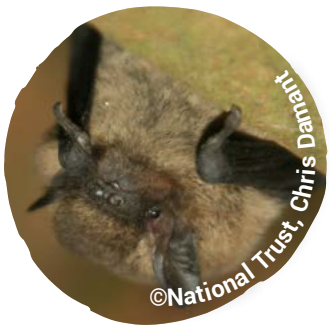
Swarming bat assemblage

Alcathoe

Bechstein's


Brandt's


Brown long-eared



Common pipistrelle

Daubenton's

Natterer's


Serotine


Western barbastelle


Whiskered

Atlantic salmon

European eel


Sea lamprey

White-clawed crayfish

Potter flower bee

Long-horned bee

Dingy mocha

Barberry carpet moth

Micromoths of limestone cliffs assemblage

Cliff plume

Samphire knot-horn


Duke of Burgundy

Lulworth skipper

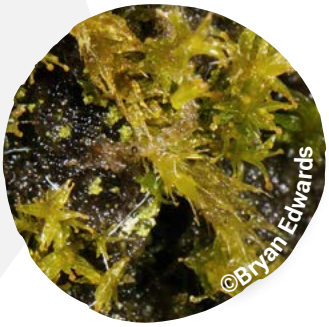
Marsh fritillary

Richardson's case-bearer

Blackwort

Chalk threadwort


Stinking goosefoot



Thatch-moss

Dwarf eelgrass

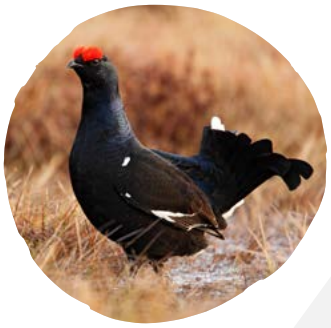
Eelgrass

Priority species for conservation translocation

Conservation translocations are the deliberate movement and release of plants, animals or fungi into the wild for conservation purposes. When carefully planned and managed, this can enrich the natural environment and can often provide wider benefits for people.

The priority species list includes several species which are proposed for conservation translocation, or population enhancement for species already subject to translocation or reintroduction in England. Some species have been proposed because suitable habitat is now being restored, others have been included because of their significant role in maintaining habitats and ecosystems. Potential activities for many of these species focus on better understanding evidence, risks, local views and deliverability. These are the steps needed towards the ambition for their reintroduction in future, rather than steps to complete a successful translocation within the lifetime of the local nature recovery strategy.

Find out more about conservation translocations and their impacts in the Species Recovery supporting document, along with the potential activities for the priority species proposed for conservation translocation listed below.



Black grouse

Corncrake

Red-backed shrike

Red-billed chough

White stork

Eurasian beaver

European bison

Pine marten

Natterjack toad

Black-backed meadow ant


Narrow headed ant


Shrill carder bee

Ladybird spider


Orange-spotted emerald

Pearl-bordered fritillary

Speckled footman

Micro-moths of Dyer's greenwed assemblage

Greenwood buff or flat-body

Greenweed dot or pigmy

Greenweed piercer

Greenweed Smith

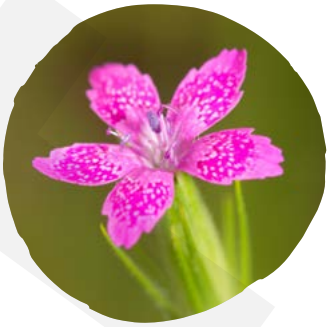
Laburnum leaf-miner

Large gold case-bearer


Heath tiger beetle

Wart-biter

Black poplar


Deptford pink


Elm species


Ivy-leaved bellflower


Juniper

Pheasant's-eye

Wild asparagus

Dorset's nature recovery maps

Dorset's nature recovery maps are tools that can be used to identify opportunities and guide nature recovery activities in the county based on shared priorities agreed by local people and organisations.

A collection of layers make up Dorset's nature recovery maps. Three layers form part of the local nature recovery strategy, together these are called the Local Habitat Map.

The Local Habitat Map shows:

Dorset's nature areas of national importance

Dorset's nature areas of national importance layer combines all the sites that are currently recognised and protected within the land-use planning system for their biodiversity value.

It includes:

- national conservation sites
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Ramsar (wetland of international importance)
  - National Nature Reserve (NNR)
  - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- irreplaceable habitat

Defra calls this layer Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB).

Thorncombe Wood pony

Dorset's high opportunity nature areas

Dorset's high opportunity nature areas are where efforts should be targeted to meet Dorset's nature recovery priorities and will help guide where funding is targeted. It was created from:

- farmers, landowners and land mangers putting forward their land where they are planning to do something to help nature recovery
- modelling of opportunities to expand and connect the largest areas of semi-natural habitat (wetland, heathland, grassland, woodland and coastal habitats) in Dorset
- modelling of opportunities to deliver wider environmental benefits through habitat creation or enhancement, for example, air and water quality benefits
- cutting out the highest-grade agricultural land, dense housing areas, and the nature areas of national importance layer

The high opportunity nature areas do not overlap with the nature areas of national importance. This is because lots of the nature areas of national importance already have statutory management plans that include nature recovery activities.

Defra calls this layer Areas that could become of Importance for Biodiversity (ACB). together.

Dorset's potential activities

The potential activities layer suggests what activities to do where, to help achieve the nature recovery priorities.

The layer shows primary and secondary activities. Primary activities suggest what type of habitat creation or enhancement could be most beneficial in an area. This is based on the data that created the high opportunity nature areas and takes into account that some habitat types are particularly scarce in Dorset.

Secondary activities are also provided to reflect that it may often be beneficial to consider a mix of habitat types or nature recovery activities as part of a land management plan.

The primary and secondary activities are a guide, not a prescription. Site-specific assessments and management plans would confirm what would work best in an area. Additional advice on ecology, planning requirements, historic environment, flooding and funding options may be needed to deliver the activity suggested. There are lots of organisations and partnerships in Dorset that can help with this.

Defra calls this layer Potential Measures (PM).

Using the mapped and written activities together

The potential activities layer gives a broad suggestion of primary and secondary activities, but this could involve doing many different things that are not all mapped. So, this layer must be used alongside the potential activities listed under the 12 local nature recovery strategy priorities in the written part of the strategy.

For example, if you are looking at the potential activities layer and the primary activity is "create or enhance woodland habitat", you should read the potential activities listed under priority 2.

There are also many potential activities that need to be delivered right across the county, or cannot be shown spatially, and so are not mapped.

For example:

- wildlife-friendly gardening and urban greening
- sustainable farming practices
- feasibility studies to identify suitable locations for species recovery

It is therefore essential that the Local Habitat Map and written part of the strategy are used together.

Along the coast, the Local Habitat Map extends to the mean low water line, except where the council boundary extends beyond this, such as Poole Harbour. Dorset's nature areas of national importance includes some marine sites beyond this boundary because potential activities on the land can have a positive effect on them. However, it is beyond the scope of this strategy to map high opportunity nature areas and potential activities in marine areas.

Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps

Find out more about how to use the Local Habitat Map and how we produced each layer in the Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps.

The guide also explains more about the additional layers that are available as part of Dorset's nature recovery maps. These additional layers do not form part of the local nature recovery strategy, they are extra tools that may provide helpful information on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery.

View Dorset's nature recovery maps

Achieving nature recovery

The maps visualise the important nature areas in Dorset, and guide where there is opportunity to deliver the potential activities. The data behind the maps can help us understand the scale of habitat creation, restoration and nature-friendly land management needed to achieve our shared vision for nature recovery in Dorset and contribute to the 30by30 target.

The figures below show how much of Dorset is currently covered by semi-natural habitat and protected nature areas. The figures also indicate how much more of Dorset could be contributing to nature recovery over the next 10 years, as everyone delivers the potential activities as part of our joint mission.

Nature in Dorset now

The current picture based on the best available data:

- the nature areas of national importance layer cover 11.5% of Dorset, these are sites protected within the land-use planning system for their biodiversity value
- semi-natural habitat covers 19.3% of Dorset, made up of the following broad habitat classes:
  - unimproved and semi-improved grassland covers 3.3% of Dorset
  - broadleaved and mixed woodland covers 10.4%
  - heathland covers 2.2%
  - rivers and other water bodies cover 1.7%
  - wetland covers 0.4%
  - coastal covers 1.3%
- large semi-natural habitat areas, over 100 hectares, cover 9.7%

Nature recovery in Dorset in the next 10 years

A guide to what we can achieve based on implementing the priorities and activities in the high opportunity nature areas:

- the high opportunity nature areas layer covers 49.1% of Dorset, made up of:
- if you combine that with, the existing nature areas of national importance, this covers 60.6% of Dorset, indicating how the nature recovery network could grow and help achieve 30 by 30

Delivery and funding

Funding to deliver the 30by30 nature recovery target in Dorset will require people to work together, with opportunities such as biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation and Environmental Land Management schemes, as well as through local initiatives across Dorset. This section summarises different ways to fund and support the delivery of nature recovery, based on information available at the time of writing the strategy. Updated information may be available on the Nature Recovery Dorset website.

Nature Recovery Dorset

Nature Recovery Dorset is a countywide initiative that has been born out of working with so many individuals across such a wide range of sectors. It celebrates and supports the individuals, farmers, landowners, communities and organisations who are helping restore nature in Dorset. There's no cost to join the Nature Recovery Dorset network - just a shared desire to make more space for nature in Dorset.

By itself a strategy achieves nothing if it does not lead to effective action. To help promote a seamless transition from strategy preparation to delivery, the Nature Recovery Dorset network brings together the variety of nature recovery activities happening across the county.

Volunteers on Canford Heath

Housing and green infrastructure

Biodiversity net gain

Biodiversity net gain is a legal obligation, introduced in February 2024, that requires new developments to leave biodiversity in a measurably (10%) better state than before. Simply put this means developers must either create or enhance habitats on-site or, if that is not possible, purchase off-site biodiversity units to improve habitats elsewhere. The goal of biodiversity net gain is to ensure that development projects contribute positively to the environment by boosting wildlife habitats and overall biodiversity. Both BCP Council and Dorset Council planning authorities have guidance in place.

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy maps high opportunity nature areas for habitat creation, connecting of existing ecosystems, and maximising of environmental benefits.

The high opportunity nature areas can guide on-site biodiversity net gain by influencing the habitats considered as part of site design. They also guide off-site biodiversity net gain by agreeing evidence-based locations to expand and connect existing habitat. This can influence the 'strategic significance' multiplier in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric that is used to calculate biodiversity net gain.

This mechanism means that there is an incentive for developers to align with the High Opportunity Areas when choosing the location of off-site biodiversity net gain units. Understanding this link is crucial for developers, landowners, planning authorities, and ecologists involved in biodiversity net gain delivery. If you create or improve the habitat listed as the 'primary activity' in a high opportunity nature area, you might be able to earn 1.15 times more biodiversity units, thanks to the strategic significance multiplier.

Environment mitigation delivery for development

Funding is made available through development contributions to mitigate the adverse impacts of housing and other development on internationally important habitats and species. This funding is spent to reduce impacts such as nutrient levels, air quality and recreational disturbance.

The focus is primarily on reducing negative impacts or restoring or recreating habitats that have been lost, but often mitigation activities can also be designed to contribute to nature recovery. For example, a suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) provides nature areas for people to enjoy as an alternative to sensitive habitats like heathlands, although their primary purpose is recreation, they can be managed using nature-friendly practices to also deliver for nature recovery. Similarly, managing land to help reduce nitrate inputs to rivers will often involve creating wildlife habitat that can boost biodiversity as well as delivering ecosystem services.

Find out more about Environment Mitigation delivery.

Habitat compensation and restoration is also delivered as part of developing flood and coastal defences, this is coordinated through the Environment Agency's Habitat Compensation and Restoration programme.

Sustainable farming and forestry

Dorset farmers and foresters incorporating sustainable food and timber production practices, alongside nature recovery, is the key to success in delivering the 30by30 target in Dorset. Many Dorset farmers and foresters are involved in long-term stewardship of our natural environment, alongside food production and other rural businesses. Several farmer clusters are running in Dorset, these are groups led by farmers who work together to collectively deliver greater benefits for nature across the farmed landscape.

Farmers working individually or in clusters have several ways to help deliver nature recovery and the farming sector is currently going through changes to payments available for different environmental actions. The Future Farming Resilience programme offers free support to farmers across the South West during this period of change, known as the Agricultural Transition.

Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) are a set of government schemes designed to reward and provide financial incentives to farmers and landowners who deliver environmental benefits through nature friendly practices on their land.

Farmers visit Dorset Council on Back British Farming day

Find out the latest different schemes and government funding for farmers, growers and land managers.

In parts of Dorset, the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme provides funding and advice to farmers and land managers for projects that support nature recovery, or nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. FiPL is available in the Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

The local nature recovery strategy helps guide which nature recovery activities are appropriate in different areas, so can provide evidence to support scheme or project plans and funding applications.

Community and individual projects

In Dorset, communities and individuals play a crucial role in delivering nature recovery by working together to create, improve, restore and protect local nature areas. Community-led initiatives, such as planting native trees, creating wildflower meadows, or restoring ponds, can all contribute to improving habitats for wildlife.

Dorset Wildlife Trust, a partner in the local nature recovery strategy, has developed new online resources to help more people take action for nature as an individual or community.

As part of this, case studies have been prepared to tell community stories and inspire more people to be part of nature's recovery. These include a roadside verge garden, churchyard, library garden, GP Practice, swift group, and partnership between a town council and its 'In Bloom' group.

Advice is also available to individuals and environmental groups from a range of organisations like, National Trust, Parks Foundation, RSPB, Dorset Council and BCP Council. And Volunteer Centre Dorset have a range of volunteering opportunities, including gardening, nature conservation and outdoor activities.

Nature recovery in action

Patients of The Adam Practice in Hamworthy have collaborated with Dorset Wildlife Trust and Poole Men's Shed to plant a raised bed with sensory plants and herbs to encourage wildlife. Together they have also built bird boxes and planted areas around the GP practice with sunflowers, shrubs and pollinator-friendly herbs.

Adam Practice Garden, Hamworthy

Businesses funding and delivering projects

Businesses in Dorset are key to delivering nature recovery, from making space for nature on their own premises to helping fund nature recovery projects across the county.

Litter Free Dorset has been working closely with businesses across Dorset to inspire them to take action for nature. Through the Sustainable Business Network, businesses have been supported to become more informed about nature recovery and the simple steps they can take to get involved. From installing pollinator-friendly hanging baskets and bug hotels to creating wildlife-friendly outdoor seating areas, these efforts have supported local biodiversity and shown that every business can make a difference for nature. A 'Nature Recovery' category was introduced to the Sustainable Business Award, with 20 practical actions for businesses to adopt—whether they have large green spaces or limited outdoor areas. This category celebrates businesses that are taking meaningful steps to support nature. Over 50 businesses have already completed their nature recovery actions, proving that no matter the size or sector, every business can contribute to protecting and restoring Dorset's natural environment.

Projects for Nature is a collaborative example of green finance bringing businesses together alongside Defra and other expert environmental bodies to bridge the funding gap and accelerate the finance needed to deliver nature recovery.

Nature recovery actions taken by Sustainable Business Award winners

New green finance and funding

A range of funding streams are available or emerging to deliver nature recovery. A blended green finance approach might include private investment through nature or carbon markets, business investment as part of corporate social responsibility, and grant funding from government or charitable organisations.

For projects wishing to market the climate benefit of habitat restoration, the Woodland Carbon Code and the Peatland Code are useful quality assurance standards.

Throughout the implementation of Dorset's local nature recovery strategy, information on funding opportunities and potential delivery partners will be added to the Nature Recovery Dorset webpages.

Biodiversity duty

The biodiversity duty refers to the legal or ethical obligation placed on public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This duty requires authorities to consider the impacts of their actions on ecosystems and wildlife, regularly report on action and progress and ensure sustainable practices that conserve natural habitats are in place.

Public authorities can use the local nature recovery strategy to inform how they manage land and make relevant regulatory decisions.

Arable reversion in the Tadnoll Brook Catchment

Related plans and strategies

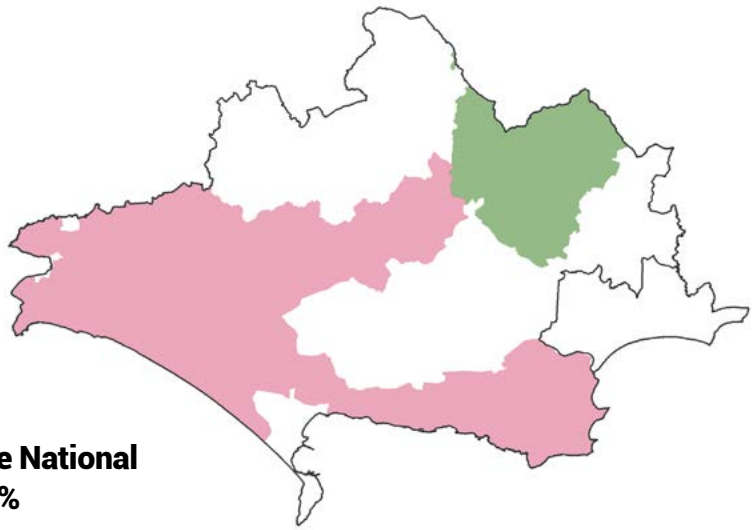
In agreeing Dorset's priorities and activities, relevant spatial plans and strategies have been looked at to align this strategy with other relevant documents in the county. The links to local plans and national landscape management plans are summarised below. Find out more about other Policies, Strategies and Plans relating to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in the supporting document, including flood risk management and the BCP Green Infrastructure strategy.

The government intends for local nature recovery strategies to inform the planning process. Local planning authorities must take account of local nature recovery strategies to ensure nature recovery requirements are properly reflected in the planning system. There are some similarities between what the local nature recovery strategy will provide and what the local plans must achieve.

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Dorset Council and BCP Council Local Plans
Agree **priorities** for nature's recovery	Identify **Strategic Priorities** for the development and use of land and provide strong development management policies and guidance to support the natural environment
Map the most valuable existing areas for nature	**Identify, map and safeguard** components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks
Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals	Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priorty habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; **identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity**

Find out more about how the local plans and the local nature recovery strategy work together.

The local nature recovery strategy also relates to the management plans and nature recovery targets of both Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape, which together cover 52% of Dorset as shown in the map.



Dorset National Landscape 41.8%

Cranborne Chase National Landscape 10.8%

Brit catchment landscape

Landscape scale projects

Landscape scale projects focus on large areas (over 500 hectares) by managing and conserving natural resources across big geographical areas, with diverse ecosystems, habitats, and land uses. For example, a project might work to restore wetlands, plant more woodland in degraded areas, and connect wildlife corridors, while engaging local communities, foresters and landowners in more sustainable farming practices. By working at a landscape scale, nature can recover more effectively by ensuring that wildlife can thrive across larger areas and ecosystems can function more naturally. These large scale projects aim to address environmental challenges holistically, considering ecological, social, and economic factors to create sustainable solutions.

Landscape scale projects are often collaborative, involving partnerships between environmental organisations, private landowners, sustainable farming and forestry practices and local communities all working together with a common goal of nature recovery as well as addressing issues such as climate change, flood management, and soil health. Landscape projects that are currently in development or are being proposed can be seen on Dorset's nature recovery maps.

Nature recovery in action

West Dorset Wilding is the organisation delivering the Brit catchment recovery project, it is a landowner and farmer-led charity taking action to restore ecosystems and increase nature in West Dorset through rewilding and regenerative agriculture.

Measuring success of nature recovery

The Defra Secretary of State will instruct responsible authorities to review and republish their local nature recovery strategies every 3 to 10 years. These reviews should show what nature recovery activities for Dorset have been done since the strategy was last published, and map locations where they have or are expected to bring about significant or lasting positive change. Further guidance from Defra is expected to enable us to carry out this measurement.

As well as recognising nature recovery activities completed, initial measurement streams have been identified that could help measure Dorset's success in delivering nature recovery. These are based on the many existing monitoring activities already taking place, whether required for planning applications, designated site monitoring, baseline surveys for a farm, cluster, site or project, or voluntary monitoring groups. These can be broadly split as habitat, species, or enabling measures.

Habitat measures

- number, extent and condition of Dorset's designated sites
- data from monitoring projects and initiatives, for example, Great Big Dorset Hedge, Dorset Heaths Partnership Monitoring, Water Guardians, Purbeck Natural History Forum
- biodiversity net gain, including the biodiversity gain site register
- water quality and nutrient levels
- national forest inventory
- Dorset Heaths Partnership Monitoring

Most habitats are very slow to change and, despite restoration, may not be able to be classed as priority habitats for many years. Therefore, measuring success should also use species measures. Species change occurs more quickly and assessing indicator and priority species, along with other things, can be very useful for checking habitat restoration is going in the right direction.

Species measures

Existing citizen science surveys with good participation in Dorset can give an indicator of species abundance. The Big Garden Birdwatch hosted by RSPB and the Big Butterfly Count hosted by Butterfly Conservation have agreed to share Dorset data to help measure nature recovery. Other citizen science surveys will be investigated so the abundance of other taxonomic groups can be measured, and these surveys promoted to encourage participation across Dorset.

More specific surveys to monitor the priority species will help to measure success against priority 12, although data may not be publicly accessible for protected species. Additionally, indicator species surveys can support the habitat measures and inform habitat condition. Communicating what these indicator species are for different habitats and how to identify them could enable more people to spot and record signs of nature recovery.

Enabling measures

The Nature Recovery Dorset network and peer-to-peer learning, such as video case studies and social media, will give an indication of how many people are engaged with nature recovery in Dorset. Digital resources can inspire others to take action for nature and signpost to information such as ideas for activities and funding mechanisms. Monitoring of activities which deliver the priorities will show how each priority is being delivered.

The submissions from the farmers and landowners for their land to be included in the high opportunity nature areas provides information on the different priorities they will help to achieve.

At a national level, Defra and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) have been asked to consider ways to improve the sharing of information on the actions farmers are taking for nature recovery through ELMs, to showcase their contribution to the nature recovery priorities and the 30by30 target.

Nature recovery in action

Sophie Alexander runs Hemsworth Farm near Witchampton, a 500 hectare organic arable and dairy farm with a strong focus on soil health, biodiversity, and regenerative practices.

Hemsworth Farm collaborated on the Biodiversity Monitoring 24/7 Project, testing different digital technologies to monitor the amount and variety of wildlife on the farm. This innovative project shows how digital monitoring can be used along with in-person biodiversity surveys, to help farmers make informed land management decisions to benefit both wildlife and food production.

Dorset Environmental Records Centre

The Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) is an organisation dedicated to collecting, managing, and sharing information about the county's wildlife, habitats, and geological features. They work to support biodiversity conservation and environmental decision-making. They maintain a comprehensive database of species records and habitat data, including lots of records submitted by local recording groups and citizen scientists. DERC play a crucial role in monitoring Dorset's natural heritage and providing insights for ecological research, land management, and planning initiatives.

DERC are essential in the measuring of nature recovery and showing the direction of travel towards achieving our 30by30 target. Sending in survey data and utilising DERC's services will be key in bringing together all the existing monitoring work being undertaken. This will be explored further during the implementation of the local nature recovery strategy.

Sophie at Hemsworth Farm

©Sophie Alexander

Supporting documents

Visit the supporting documents page to find the following:

- Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation and Engagement Report
- Pressures on Nature in Dorset and Opportunities for Recovery
- Species recovery supporting document
- Guide to the Dorset Nature Recovery Maps
- Policies, Strategies and Plans relating to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Data sources

Approximate percentages of land cover in Dorset

Percentages shown on page 25 come from a land cover map created in 2018 using local data and satellite imagery. The data is indicative, not definitive, but provides a useful indication of roughly how different habitat types and land uses cover Dorset. Please see the Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps for further information on how the map was created and data used.

Census area and garden coverage

The map on page 26 shows all the census output areas in Dorset, these are areas with similar numbers of people and houses used for national statistics. The areas are shown in different shades of green based on how much of the area is covered by gardens, using data held by Dorset Council garden waste team, and BCP Council's green infrastructure strategy. The map is not definitive but gives an indication of the coverage of residential gardens across Dorset.

Declines in Dorset's semi-natural habitats from 1930 to 2015

Information on page 28 is taken from:

- Trends in natural capital, ecosystem services and economic development in Dorset
- Mapping to inform conservation: A case study of changes in semi-natural habitats and their connectivity over 70 years
- Natural Value Report
- History of the heaths
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Useful terms

Biodiversity refers to the variety and amount of all life on Earth, this includes plants, animals, bacteria and fungi. For our planet to stay healthy we need a large variety of plants and animals.

Increasing biodiversity is a key aim of nature recovery, as well as restoring natural processes and functioning ecosystems. This means not just having pockets of nature-rich areas around the county, but having thriving natural habitats and ecosystems that support both people and wildlife.

Citizen science is when members of the public get involved in collecting and analysing data relating to the natural world, often as part of collaborative research projects with professional scientists.

Climate emergency refers to a declaration acknowledging the urgent need to act on the causes and impacts of climate change and prevent irreversible environmental damage.

An **ecological network** is a system of interacting species within an ecosystem that are connected by various relationships. For nature recovery, connected nature areas are more valuable to the natural environment than individual, fragmented parts.

Ecosystems are the interactions between a community of plants, animals plants, animals, bacteria and other organisms that live in an area, and their interaction with the non-living components of that place, like the climate, soil and water.

People and wildlife are all part of ecosystems, and small changes from human activity can disrupt the whole ecosystem.

Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans derive from natural ecosystems, such as clean air, water, food, climate regulation, and recreation.

Food chains show how plants and animals get their energy, with arrows showing the flow of energy between each living thing that eats the other. Food chains usually start with organisms, like green plants, that produce their own food, followed by animals or organisms that only eat plants, then predator animals that eat other animals are at the top of the chain.

Fragmentation is when habitats are broken up into smaller, isolated patches, which can make species movement difficult, reduce biodiversity, and be hard for nature to recover.

Habitats are where plants, animals, fungi and other organisms live. Habitats have the resources and conditions that a species needs, for example food, temperature, light and soils. Some individual species have very specific requirements, others can exist or even thrive in a range of different habitats. Broad habitat types, such as rivers and mixed woodland, are categories used to describe places with certain characteristics made up of vegetation and wildlife. **Semi-natural habitats** are those that have been changed in some ways by human activity, but still retain much of their biodiversity and natural processes.

A **layer** is a set of information that is 'layered' over a map to allow us to view the information geographically, for example, county boundaries. Multiple layers can be stacked on top of each other and coloured differently to view different sets of information at once and see how they interact.

Natural capital refers to the natural assets, like soil, water, and biodiversity, which are essential for supporting ecosystems and driving nature recovery efforts.

Nature-based solutions are actions which sustainably use nature to provide environmental or societal benefits and ecosystem services, while also helping enhance or restore the natural assets and ecosystems.

Nature emergency refers to a declaration acknowledging the urgent need to restore and protect ecosystems to halt the decline in wildlife and natural habitats.

The climate and nature emergencies are closely linked. Climate change is accelerating the decline of nature while the loss of natural habitats makes it harder to combat climate change. Both emergencies have been caused by human activity, such as releasing emissions, damaging habitats, and using too many natural resources.

A **nature network** is an ecological network that also delivers ecosystem services for people. The **Nature Recovery Network** is a growing national network of wildlife-rich places to increase and restore nature in England.

National landscapes are designated areas protected for the benefit of the nation and local people and wildlife. Dorset is covered by 2 national landscapes: Dorset National Landscape and Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Non-native species are animals and plants that have arrived in the UK from abroad through trade or accidental transport on planes and ships. Many are harmless, but **invasive non-native species** are those that spread and outcompete native species, threatening habitats and ecosystems.

Resilience in nature refers to the ability of ecosystems to withstand and recover from disturbances, such as extreme weather, pollution, or human activities.

Species are plants, animals, fungi and single-celled organisms that have similar characteristics and can reproduce. Similar species can be grouped into sub-groups called taxa. For example, humans, hedgehogs and horses are all different species but can be grouped together within the taxon of mammals.

Sustainable means being able to continue doing something for a long period of time, with little or no damage to the environment. Using nature's limited resources sustainably is about meeting our current needs without harming wildlife or preventing future generations from meeting their needs.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) control surface water run off close to where it falls, combining a mixture of built and nature-based techniques to mimic natural drainage as closely as possible, and accounting for the predicted impacts of climate change. The type of system that would be appropriate will vary from small scale interventions such as permeable paving and soakaways that can be used in very small developments to larger integrated schemes in major developments