

EMDT

Environment Mitigation Delivery Team

ANNUAL DELIVERY REPORT 2025 - 2026



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1. Executive summary

The Environment and Mitigation Delivery Team (EMDT) have delivered a comprehensive programme of environmental mitigation across Dorset, enabling sustainable growth while protecting internationally designated habitats. Key achievements include the expansion of nutrient mitigation land and the sale of nutrient credits, delivery of heathland infrastructure projects, implementation of air quality interventions, and increased engagement within the recreation mitigation programme. Monitoring and data collection have been enhanced across all areas, supporting evidence-led decision making. Strong partnership working with developers, landowners, public bodies and local organisations remains central to delivery. EMDT continues to provide a robust and adaptable mitigation framework that ensures compliance with the Habitats Regulations while supporting sustainable development across Dorset.

1.1 Background

1.2 Structure and Governance

The EMDT sits within the Environment Policy and Partnerships Team within Dorset Council and includes:

- Recreation Mitigation Coordinator and Team Leader
- Coastal Engagement Warden (Poole Harbour)
- Project Support Officer
- Heathland Mitigation Coordinator
- Senior Air Quality Officer
- Senior Nutrient Officers

Governance is supported by a steering group(s) and / or technical working group(s) which includes representatives from Dorset Council, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP), Natural England, Non-Government Organisations (NGO) and land managers.

The team delivers on behalf of BCP and Dorset Council with the exception of the Heathland Mitigation Coordinator who delivers on behalf of Dorset Council only.

1.3 Funding

Mitigation delivery is funded through a combination of:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Section 106 Agreements
- Nutrient Mitigation Fund (LNMF)
- Additional Nutrient Neutrality funding is recycled through the sale of nutrient credits, enabling reinvestment into further mitigation projects.

For more information, view the [introductory Video](#) and subscribe to the [EMDT newsletter](#).

2. Strategic Objectives

2.1 Summary

The Environment Mitigation Delivery Team (EMDT) works to protect internationally designated habitats by ensuring mitigation requirements are met for development affecting Dorset Heathlands, Poole Harbour, Chesil and the Fleet, and other sensitive sites. The team delivers Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) through wardening, education, engagement and monitoring programmes that reduce recreational impacts on protected habitats. EMDT provides clear mitigation pathways for developers, supporting compliance with Habitats Regulations, nutrient neutrality and air quality requirements. Working closely with landowners, Natural England, NGOs and other partners, the team delivers and manages Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), habitat improvements and access infrastructure that help divert visitor pressure away from vulnerable sites. Monitoring data is used to assess effectiveness and inform adaptive management, while long-term funding secured through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements ensures sustainable mitigation delivery. Public engagement and behaviour change initiatives further promote responsible recreation and support nature recovery.

2.2 Links to Plans and Strategies

- [Chesil and Fleet Interim Strategy](#)
- [Dorset Heathlands Interim Air Quality Strategy \(2020–2025\)](#)
- [Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework](#)
- [Nitrogen Reduction in Poole Harbour](#)
- [Poole Harbour 2019 – 2022 supplementary planning document](#)

3. Chesil and the Fleet

3.1 Recreational Disturbance Summary

During 2025/26, the Chesil and Fleet Recreation Mitigation Programme delivered significant conservation, engagement and access management outcomes. A total of 190 patrols were undertaken, supported by 938 volunteer hours, with 7 public events engaging 150 people. The Wild Chesil Visitor Centre welcomed 40,262 visitors and remained open 362 days. The Fleet Explorer engaged 987 people, an increase from the previous year. Little Tern conservation efforts recorded 61 nests, 55 breeding pairs, 67% hatching success, and at least 39 fledglings, supported by over 1,000 volunteer hours. Overall, £167,240 was invested in mitigation projects, visitor management, engagement and habitat protection initiatives.

[Detailed information on project delivery is available in the Chesil and Fleet Recreation Mitigation Delivery Report 2025-2026.docx](#)

4. Dorset Heathlands

4.1. Air Quality Summary

The Air Quality Mitigation Programme delivered habitat restoration and monitoring projects to reduce traffic-related nitrogen pollution on Dorset Heathlands. During 2025/26, approximately 6 hectares of heathland were restored through scrub clearance and soil scraping at Avon Heath, Matcham's View and Upton Heath. Air quality monitoring was undertaken at 14 heathland SAC/SPA sites, supported by around 15 trained volunteers, while vegetation condition surveys covered 180 hectares. Monitoring found all sites exceeded critical nitrogen load thresholds, with road traffic identified as a key pollution source at 12 roadside locations. Total expenditure on infrastructure projects was £78,570, and an educational pilot engaged primary school pupils in air pollution awareness activities.

[Detailed information on project delivery is available in the Air Quality Annual Delivery Report 2026.pdf](#)

4.2. Heathland Infrastructure Projects

Substantial mitigation has been delivered via heathland infrastructure, which not only supports sustainable development but protects Dorset Heathlands. Five projects reached practical completion, with a further seven projects in progress. 19 planning applications within 5 km of heathland were assessed, five pre-application consultations took place, and four bespoke mitigation solutions were developed for campsite proposals. Annual monitoring was completed across 17 SANG sites, confirming they remained in good functional condition, with no Step-In Rights triggered. Total project funding agreed during the reporting period was £105,581, supporting strategic access improvements, SANG delivery and long-term mitigation management.

[Detailed information on project delivery is available in the Heathland Mitigation Delivery Report 2025-2026.pdf](#)

5. Poole Harbour

5.1 Nutrient Neutrality summary

Dorset Council was awarded £4.63m of grant funding in 2023 to support the delivery of nitrogen mitigation within the Poole Harbour catchment. During 2025/26, the Nutrient Neutrality

Programme secured both temporary and permanent mitigation to enable development while reducing nitrogen impacts in the Poole Harbour Catchment. 112.22 hectares of additional mitigation land were secured, including 26.58 hectares protected in perpetuity. Dorset Council established 85.64 hectares of temporary fallow land and added 18.38 hectares to a Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve within the Kingcombe Nature Reserve. The programme sold 630.6 nitrogen credits, helping unlock 231 dwellings. Nutrient mitigation funding is now being recycled through credit sales, while mitigation sites continue to deliver benefits for water quality, nature recovery and community engagement.

[Detailed information on project delivery is available in the Nitrogen Mitigation Delivery Report 2026 .pdf](#)

5.2 Recreation Mitigation

During 2025/26, Poole Harbour's Bird and Recreation Initiative (BARI) delivered extensive visitor engagement, awareness raising and mitigation infrastructure across the harbour. The Coastal Engagement Warden completed 58 patrols, delivered 33 events, held 2 instructor training sessions, and engaged 37 partner organisations and businesses, achieving a 94.9% positive face-to-face engagement rate. The Winter Walking Challenge grew from 32 to 115 members, generating almost 15,000 online views, while the 'Welcome Back the Birds' campaign reached 82 people in person and over 10,000 online views. Key infrastructure projects included the Upton Country Park Viewpoint, Baiter Park Mural and Interpretation Project, and Blue Lagoon Zoning Project, all designed to reduce disturbance to protected birds while improving visitor engagement and site management. A total of £7,542 was spent on infrastructure delivery.

[Detailed information on project delivery is available in the Poole Harbour Recreation Mitigation Delivery Report 2025 - 2026.pdf](#)