

Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Joint Local Access Forum Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Dorset (DC), Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP)
Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF)

Time: 10.00am to 13.00pm

Date: Thursday 17 April 2024

Venue: Hybrid meeting (Dorset Council Offices, Committee Room 2 & Microsoft Teams)

Invitees:

DLAF Members

Philip Hackett (PH) (chair)
Janet Davis (JD) (vice chair)
Chris Slade (CS)
Nathan McCormick (NM)
Paul Tomlinson (PT)
Christopher Tucker (CT)
Mandy Willis (MW)
Nicola Harper (NH)

Local Authority Officers

Russell Goff DC (RG) (Greenspace Manager)
Graham Stanley DC (GS) (Senior Ranger)
Vanessa Penny DC (VP) (Definitive Map Manager)
Philip Elias BCP (PE) (Senior PRoW Officer)
Ruth Wharton BCP (RW)
Cllr Alex Brenton DC (AB)
Cllr Andy Hadley BCP (AH)

Apologies

Paul Tomlinson

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YTNmNWZkMjgtNDQ2My00M2YwLWI2MDQtYTJiMjdiOWRhNTBm%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%220a4edf35-f0d2-4e23-98f6-b0900b4ea1e6%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d81a2c-3ce3-45b8-b69e-a4246947c2dc%22%7d

Meeting ID: 367 335 260 633

Passcode: bh9A2Fh7

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome and introductions, apologies, declaration of interests – Chair

Apologies received from Paul Tomlinson.

Resignation of Fiona Bowles.

2. Chance for public questions – Chair

No public questions received.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting, actions & matters arising not covered elsewhere – Chair**

- **Bridge spec DDA compliance - GS**

Closed - Circulated.

- **Transport and travel links at the Millhams Mead site - RW (re Stour Valley Partnership)**

Leave open - Awaiting feedback from Natural England.

- **'Will Woodlands' – request for paths to be added to definitive map - PH/JD**

Note circulated. It was suggested to approach the landowners of Will Woodlands re: dedicating as public rights of way. Will Woodlands may be amenable to this, as part of their charitable aims is for the public to enjoy woodlands. They could be asked to dedicate the woodland as access land under Section 16 of the CROW Act. Which option should be pursued?

It was proposed to give Will Woodlands the option.

- **DLAF recruitment**

Leave open.

- **Trailway assessment to Cllr Hadley (not yet complete) - GS**

Leave open.

- **Info on LAF to Amy Smith, Nature Recovery Team - FB**

Leave open.

4. **Presentation by Jade North (JN) and Sophie Isaacs (SI) on SANGS**

SANGS – Sites of Alternative Natural Greenspaces.

SANGS are a type of infrastructure project / heathland infrastructure project (HIP).

SANGS linked to larger scale housing developments.

Strategic SANGS which mitigate for smaller, windfall developments, funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 places responsibilities on councils as the competent authorities. Sites must undergo an assessment to evaluate affect on conservation sites.

National Planning Policy Framework outlines the procedures set out by the government with guidance on whether or not to approve a proposal.

Dorset Council has a supplementary planning proposal:

To protect heathland sites – development is restricted within 400m of heathland area.

Mitigation is put in place between 400m and 5km of the heathland.

Heathland infrastructure projects.

Strategic access management and monitoring – education, engagement and monitoring of heathland and HIP projects.

Proposals are assessed for adverse effect and if they could be mitigated.

SANGS are delivered through the Planning process in consultation with external agencies.

It is important for SANGS to be identified early on as part of the Local Plan.

A SANG does not have to be dog-focused, although primarily they are in the DC area. Dog walkers are one of the main visitor pressures.

Heathland sites are monitored to understand local pressures, this is fed back into the development of SANGs.

Heathland infrastructure projects address some of the pressures.

The main design consideration of SANGS is walking and dog walking.

It is important to identify problems early on. SANGS are monitored annually for the first five years and every five years thereafter. Any changes are agreed with Natural England.

There are 19 SANGS in Dorset, most are in East Dorset. At least 14 more will be delivered. More are being discussed as part of the emerging Dorset Local Plan. There are approx. 610 acres or 247 hectares of additional recreation land that has been provided. There are 12 other types of HIPS that have been provided.

The network is fragmented. Land is generally under high demand and at premium prices. Need to understand where the heathlands are and how sites can be connected.

Wimborne

Wimborne has had a significant amount of housing development in the last few years.

By The Way Field was developed in 2012, this sits next to Lye Common which was an existing countryside space. This has created a choice of walking routes and habitats. By The Way Field provides car parking and play facilities.

Public open space alongside the river was being delivered and improved by a local developer. This is owned by DC. New pathways, plays and signage have been put in.

Two new SANG sites along the river will be called Stour View. These will ensure connectivity from the riverside walk to connect to By The Way Field.

The west of Wimborne has been developed and starting to see the edges of the SANG being wrapped around by greenspaces.

The Greenspace Team deals with the management practicalities and improvements. Any management decision sits with the purpose of the site, to protect heathland and to keep people on the SANGS.

Monitoring is carried out by Dorset Heaths Partnership.

The sites are reviewed yearly. Dorset Heaths Partnership and Dorset Dogs carry out engagement on the sites.

PH – Are equestrians considered?

JN - Equestrians do not cause a huge amount of disturbance to heathlands. Education and engagement work has been carried out with equestrian users of the heath. There can be some conflict between horse riders and dog walkers as a result of people not keeping their dogs under control. Any likely user conflict needs to be reduced. If a project came up to provide a new area for horse riders to go this would be considered. There have been no suitable sites for equestrians to date.

Action – Philip Hackett and Jade North to discuss equestrian access on SANGS.

RG – Not trying to deter horses from using the heath. SANGS are designed to reduce the impact of dogs on heathland.

JN – Yes, horses are not having a huge negative impact on heathland compared to dog walkers. There has been a big increase in dog ownership.

MW – Canford SANG in BCP is privately owned and managed. Are privately owned SANGS monitored by the council?

JN – My role only covers the DC area. There are many privately owned SANGS in the DC area, these are visited annually to ensure they are functioning appropriately and to

trouble shoot any problems. Visitor monitoring is carried out in years 1, 3, 5 and 10. Heathland monitoring is in place. Wardens record conversations on heathland sites. DC has step-in rights for privately owned SANGS to carry out work to ensure they can function properly.

NH – Some of the SANGS are on flood plains and go underwater. They should be available 365 days a year. Are they only to be available during the bird nesting season?

JN – The sites depend on land availability and what developers are proposing. There have been environmental changes which have affected some of the sites. Natural England advise on some of these matters and advise that land needs to be available during the bird nesting season. Ideally more SANGS will be sought outside of the flood zone.

NH - Are the kissing gates fitted with radar locks.

JN – Yes, they are designed to be accessible.

JD – Are the paths on the SANGS dedicated as public rights of way?

JN – No, they are not. SANGS should be fully accessible for people to walk off the paths.

5. **Presentation by Sam Dallimore (SD) on the Wareham Arc Project**

Wareham Arc Project is a landscape recovery project.

Environmental Landscape Management Scheme (ELMS):

- Sustainable Farming Incentives
- Countryside Stewardship
- Landscape Recovery

ELMS are about sustainable food production with environmental benefits.

Wareham Arc is one of the Round 1 projects of which there are 22. There are 34 projects in Round 2. Round 1 will restore 7,000km of rivers in England on 40,000 hectares of land.

Wareham Arc Project – 4,000 hectares of diverse habitats.

Landholdings have to be continuous, joined to at least one other landowner to join habitats.

Warham Arc Project is adjacent to Poole Harbour and the Purbeck Heaths. It reaches as far west as Wild Woodbury and as far east at Lychett Fields.

There are over 20 partners of farmers, private estates, local businesses, statutory bodies, and wildlife conservation charities. The project includes Wareham Forest, Sandford Heath, and Nordon Bog.

Near the end of the two-year development phase funded by Defra. Plans need to be submitted by the end of June 2025. There is a bidding period of up to six months. The 20-year funding will start from January 2026. Other funding will be needed at the end of that period.

The below plans are needed:

- Land management plan
- Monitoring land evaluation plan for ecological monitoring
- Site access plan for existing access and access improvements
- Stakeholder engagement plan
- Finance plan

A single legal entity will need to be set up. Exploring other options for finance, e.g. nutrient neutrality, carbon credits.

The vision is to create a landscape in which natural processes are restored so habitats become more resilient, as well as the businesses which rely on those habitats.

Hoping to attract more diverse audiences and create more opportunities for volunteering and engagement.

Objectives are to optimise natural processes and mitigate climate change. Hoping to improve water quality that flows out by slowing the flow in rivers and reducing the nutrient load in Poole Harbour. Hoping to deliver a range of habitats and improve / restore existing habitats and increase their connectivity. Hope to contribute to recovery of threatened species. Hope work will reduce the likelihood of fires spreading and reduce the impacts of droughts and flooding. Carrying out work on Rhododendron mapping to clear within 20 years. Provide more opportunities for volunteers and work experience. Hoping to improve accessibility in some areas. Working with partners to increase the number of engagement opportunities. Communicate the benefits of landscape recovery.

Carrying out citizen science projects. A weekly volunteer group carries out tasks. There will be weekend opportunities for working people and families, and more citizen science projects.

Hoping to run a series of guided walks for specialist groups and local communities. There will be 25 education visits which will be free to any age group.

Will be implementing health groups and routes, health cycling, dementia friendly walks. Have applied for community transport to transport under-represented groups.

Will have a project website with a map and downloadable leaflets showing all the access points.

Waymarking and paths will be improved. Benches will be provided in a few locations. Viewing screens will be built.

There are more details about landscape recovery on the government website.

Some routes will be improved. There will be a path warden scheme who will report issues. More information will be made available about the places people can go.

PH – Does this work include equestrian access?

The guidance states that Defra will not fund any work on public rights of way.

RG – Graham Stanley will be working to improve access throughout the area.

AB – How is this managed with tenant farmers and private landowners?

SD – Both are project partners.

AB – The Wareham Arc area is quite a vulnerable space with eroding of paths. There will be a lot of traffic congestion. A few of the parish councils will have issues with increasing access. It has to be carefully handled to reduce conflict.

SD – The aims of the project are not to increase visitors, but to attract more diverse visitors. The plan is not to attract tourists. Parking surfaces will be improved in Wareham Forest.

RG – Chris Peck from Active Travel is engaging with this. Would be interested to talk to parish councils who are finding increased pressure at certain times of the year.

SD – The project manager is liaising with Wessex Water about multiple issues on all three rivers.

Action – Russell Goff to pick up issues with the bridleway at Organford which crosses the A35. GS What are the issues? No live jobs on Cside for any bridleway cross A35 between Bere Regis and Lytchett Minster.

SD – There is potential in the future for other areas of land to be joined into the project area.

6. **Legal Record Team - Definitive Map & Statement – Vanessa Penny, Definitive Map Manager. Presentation (latest DMMO and path order statistics).**

Charges for public path orders and landowners deposits have increased from 1 April 2025.

Public path order charge – £5,000

Landowner deposits – £500

DC charges are now broadly in line with other local authorities.

The parish boundary changes project is progressing and will hopefully be completed by the end of 2025.

Public inquiry last December looking into a claim for Bradford Abbas Footpath 8 – The path has now been confirmed by the Secretary of State as claimed for.

No other public inquiries are currently scheduled. A few cases are currently with the Planning Inspectorate.

Confirmed a DMMO – the bridleway along the railway cutting at Portland, the objection for this was withdrawn.

Confirmed four public path orders – Thorncombe, St Leonards Farm Park, Lyme Regis and Footpath 91 at Marnhull.

Cases

DMMOs – 239 cases not started.

25 cases on the active waiting list.

45 cases in progress.

3 cases with the Planning Inspectorate – Rampisham, Chideock, Staunton Caundle.

28 cases waiting to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Public Path Orders

5 cases not started.

37 cases in progress, 11 are Town & Country Planning Act cases related to development, 6 have been confirmed.

One case is with the Planning Inspectorate – Chantry Farm, Beaminster.

7. **BCP Council Greenspace Management & Maintenance – Philip Elias, Senior Rights of Way Officer.**

Concluding the recruitment of a rights of way officer, will hopefully have someone in post at the start of the summer.

Revising the Avon Valley Path – Remains inaccessible. The course is to be revised.

BCP's draft local plan has been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate because BCP did not engage with Dorset and New Forest Councils about housing needs. There will be a second consultation process.

New Parish & Town Councils Consultation – Commenced on 31 March 2025 and will run until 22 June 2025.

BCP have progressed with the sale of the Christchurch Civic Centre – Enquiries were made by a local residents' association for recording of access areas of the site so they will be preserved during development. A residents' association have expressed interest in the sale of the civic site. The public were concerned about potential loss of access. There is potential to increase accessibility and routes. The DMMO is yet to be made.

8. **Dorset Council Greenspace Management & Maintenance – Russell Goff**

RG – Sophie Isaacs (SI) is senior ranger for East, Graham Stanley manages North & Purbeck, Dave Ackerley manages Central, and Stuart Semple manages West.

East

SI – Bridleway E467 across Horton Common – Proposal for improvements is with Natural England.

Five footpath bridges have been re-decked in Alderholt and Stur Marshall.

A style two gate has been identified in Horton.

Working with the area ranger for the National Trust on access improvements and surfacing works.

North & Purbeck

Graham Stanley is getting to grips with the Purbeck area, including rights of way sites, verge issues and the South West Coast Path.

Integrating the North and Purbeck teams together.

Built six new bridges across the North and Purbeck area.

30 more bridges are to be re-decked.

The team have surfaced 4km of rights of way.

Replaced seven stiles.

Investigating the benefit of ORVal, a Defra tool for assessing the economic value of parks and paths. [ORVal Outdoor Recreation Valuation](#)

A lot of planning applications have been received. Working with the Planning team to ensure regulations are adhered to.

Working on a recruitment plan for new DLAF members. **Action GS to develop**

West

National Landscapes funding for a new bridleway at Chideock is underway.

National Landscapes have funded a permissive accessible route in West Bay, it can be used as part of the tramper route.

Work is continuing to surface the coast path at Hive Point around Chickerell to create a more accessible route to prevent dogs disturbing the birds.

Working with Bridport Town Council to surface a small section of Happy Island.

Waiting for the Secretary of State's decision on the King Charles III coast path.

Built seven bridges, one yet to be installed.

Central

Piddle Valley Project – Looking for other work to move forward.

Surfacing work off the Swannery car park funded by the RSPB and Ramblers Association and Natural England.

Installed two GRP bridleway bridges in Broadmayne, one path in Cerne Abbas, one in Thornford, and one other to be installed.

Work on the High Angle Battery on Portland, opening on 26 April 2025.

Action – Russell Goff to ask Bridget Betts to arrange for councillors to visit the High Angle Battery.

Action – Russell Goff to circulate stats of number of jobs currently being worked on.

Action - Russell Goff to raise access at Wills Woodland with Stuart Semple.

JD – Where do Traffic Regulation Orders get advertised?

RG – Local press and online.

JD – Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders are entered onto Dorset Explorer, these are not necessarily updated and removed when applicable.

RG – Worked with the GIS Team to alert when a notice is elapsing and a reminder to remove it.

JD – Is it made clear to the applicant that they need to re-apply?

RG – Yes.

JD – The RSPB have received a complaint from a wheelchair user that they're less able to use the path at Radipole since it's been resurfaced.

Action – Russell Goff to follow up wheelchair accessibility of the path at Radipole.

9. **Piddle Path Update – Janet Davis**

Repairs were started in Summer 2024. The Piddle Path Campaign Group is very pleased with the work carried out.

10. **Update on King Charles III ECP - Updates from Tim Hall, Natural England.**

Note circulated.

11. **Member Feedback from Associated Groups / Meetings - Dorset National Landscape – Janet Davis**

Working on the next management plan. JD attended a workshop meeting re: access. The plan will be out for consultation later this year.

Action – Add Dorset National Landscape management plan to the next agenda.

Cranborne Chase National Landscape (NH)

Consultation on the draft management plan and response were circulated.

12. **Ratification of responses made since last meeting:**

- (i) **Tree felling responses – JD to circulate**
- (ii) **Cycling on the Coast Path – JD to circulate**
- (iii) **Cranborne Chase National Landscape draft management plan - NH to circulate**

Notes circulated.

13. **AOB**

JD – What is the DC's policy when a report is received re: paths being ploughed and cropped over? Is there anything the LAF can do about it?

PH – The NFU stresses that farmers should maintain their public rights of way.

RG – Farmers should run a roller down the path within 24 hours. The landowner is contacted and followed up with a letter and a map. Often, once the process is concluded the crop has gone. Could speak to the NFU and ask them to contact their members. Not many reports are received. Farmers are encouraged to plough certain fields as part of flood mitigation.

14. **Date of next meeting**

It was suggested a Google poll is used to decide the date of the next meeting.

Date organised by GS of Monday 28th July 1-4pm Committee Room 2