

**Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole
Joint Local Access Forum - Minutes**

Meeting: Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP)
Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF)
Time: 13:00 - 16:00
Date: Thursday 28 November 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)
Fiona Bowles (FB)

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)
Sophie Isaacs DC (Lead Ranger)

Additional Attendees

Katherine Church (National Trust)
Tim Hall (Natural England)

1. **Welcome and introductions, apologies, declaration of interests – Chair. Specific Welcome to Cllr Alex Brenton (DC) and Cllr Andy Hadley (BCP)**

No apologies were received.

Cllr Hadley advised he is chair of Poole Harbour Trails Group.

2. **Chance for public questions – Chair**

No public questions were received.

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

Letter sent to planning team about validation check list and reply received (to be circulated) – Vice Chair

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Actions from last meeting:

3.1 **All update email address to ensure they have corrected email address for MW sent by JD. GS to update group email for future meetings.**

28/11/24 - Email addresses have been updated. Group email needs to be set up.

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- 3.2** PH and JD to contact absent members of LAF to check if they wish to continue involvement.

28/11/24 – Closed - Absent members have been contacted.

- 3.3** **GS to check if bridge raised by NH is DDA compliant. The bridge mentioned has steps and is narrow. GS to contact NH and check this from last meeting's minutes.**

28/11/24 - GS to speak to Highways Structures team to ensure DDA compliance in the overall spec.

- 3.4** GS to follow up with RQ re Dorset Explorer point from last meeting's minutes.

28/11/24 - GS – Dorset Explorer is ever evolving, and issues are fixed when highlighted. Please send issues to DLAF address for escalation

- 3.5** FB to circulate document on ELMs payments available if not sent already.

28/11/24 - Completed

- 4. Presentation by Katherine Church (NT) / Ruth Wharton (BCP) on the Stour Valley Project.**

There is a new Stour Valley logo and strapline.

Focussing on the section of the Stour Valley that runs from Hengistbury Head to Kingston Lacey and follows the Stour Valley River along the flood plain.

There is ambition to extend the project to Blandford Forum.

The River Stour is a huge asset for almost 500,000 people, it provides water, recreation, and transport.

Stour Valley Park was created by Bournemouth Borough Council in 2013, the Stour Valley Partnership was then formed. In 2020, BCP received funding from the Future Parks Accelerator Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Katherine's role is funded by the National Trust who is a lead partner and works closely with BCP Council and Dorset Council.

More of a governance structure was needed – BCP Council, Dorset Council and the National Trust are the lead organisations for a number of mainly environmental organisations.

There are three areas of focus: Community Access & Engagement, Nature Recovery and Sustainable Livelihoods. Within the three areas are Funding & Green Finance, Monitoring & Evaluation, Identifying Stakeholder Engagement & Communications.

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The river has been severely altered. The River Stour has a status of 'good to poor'. Looking at resilience to the effects of climate change. Would like to get to a state of natural processes supporting a thriving river system.

Resilience to the effects of climate change – Regenerative land management. Looking at how farmers can implement interventions to protect soils and reduce the impact of flooding.

Access and engagement – There is lots of greenspace along the Stour Valley. Some routes are in poor condition. There are some barriers to access. It offers pockets for people to engage with nature. Some people are nervous of engaging with the natural world, the Stour Valley could provide the stepping stone for engaging with nature. Want to enable people to actively engage in a meaningful way.

Sustainable livelihoods – Looking at financial incentives for farmers.

The Stour Valley lacks identity commercially. Want to ensure the way the land is managed is commercially viable and a named landscape that people are aware of.

Working with communications and branding teams from the local council to develop a logo and website. Please send any stories of activities taking place along the Stour to Katherine.

Commercial viability of how land is managed – Natural Environment Readiness Fund – working with three farmers on biodiversity net gain and voluntary water quality markets. This project will continue until December 2025.

Identifying and enabling rights of way in Stour Valley improvements – Working with BCP Council and Dorset Council to identify and address challenges.

The Stour Valley Way runs from Hengistbury Head to Stourhead – focussing on the section up to Kingston Lacey. The valley is known to flood, there are accessibility challenges, some parts are narrow, and some parts run over private land. Some parts are cut by main roads. There are challenges of access for walkers, riders and cyclists.

Looking at short, medium and long term ambitions. Looking at community infrastructure levy as a funding opportunity.

Focussing on some of the challenges along the Stour Valley Way, and awareness and access into the Stour Valley. One of the challenges is infrastructure and areas of deprivation where people tend to be less connected with nature. Raising funds through heathland mitigation to improve paths and using funds from the Lottery to engage the community.

The boundary is a loose boundary which follows the flood plain of the river.

The Stour Valley Partnership is in touch with the River Allen Restoration Project.

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It has been agreed the Stour Valley Partnership will become the advocates for nature recovery and other organisations are better placed to deliver it. The Partnership can support fundraising.

The long term ambition is to connect greenspaces with the Stour Valley.

There is evidence of beavers just south of Kingston Lacey near Sturminster Marshall and there has been a sighting near Christchurch.

MW – Access is really key. Longham Lakes are such an important recreational ground, especially when the River Stour is flooded. It is really important the access issues are resolved.

AH – Is there a plan to extend the funding for the project? Need to ensure access and walking and cycling routes are included in the Local Plans.

KC – There is an urgency to address funding, the programme board is meeting in December to discuss this.

AH – The Flooding & Coastal Erosion and Waste Teams are looking at the Millhams Mead site. Transport and travel links across the river - how do the rights of way and local walking and cycling plan connect?

KC is working with the Rights of Way Team and the Active Travel Team to look at opportunities and possible funding. There are challenges with the Millhams Mead site.

Action – Katherine Church and Ruth Wharton to discuss transport and travel links at the Millhams Mead site.

PH – Didn't see the Ramblers or the British Horse Society logos? Need to ensure we talk about multi-use routes. Active travel routes can include horses. Need to ensure the Local Plans include equestrians.

KC – The Ramblers and British Horse Society are welcome to join the Partnership.

5. **KCIII ECP: Update Presentation by Tim Hall Senior Manager – Wessex Coast and Seas, Natural England**

Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle, Portland – The report was submitted in 2014, a Planning Enquiry took place in 2017. This stretch is due to be one of the first for the new minister to make a decision on. TH is working with Dorset Council and the South West Coast Path to walk through the route. Looking at the infrastructure along the route. Will look at an establishment grant with the council to carry out the works if approved. May consider trying to open the stretch in sections, starting with Lyme Regis to West Bay.

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West Bay – The route along the edge of the cliff has been closed due to the cliff collapses, a diversion is in place. Looking to route away from the golf course, been liaising with the golf club to find a route along the back of the course to link with the caravan park in the east, will be able to make this route fully accessible. Need to have a conversation with the landowner of the fields. If the report is approved the route can be created.

Lulworth to Kimmeridge (through the army ranges) – Looking to publish a report by March 2025. Waiting for formal sign off by the MOD for the route through the ranges. An alternative route is needed for when the ranges are closed. The alternative route remains on existing access. The relevant landowners have been written to, a copy of the final route will be circulated to the LAF. Still in consultation about one minor change to the route. The Lulworth Estate have some concerns about the route which comes out of Lulworth Cove falling into the coastal margin. There have been discussions about re-opening the old coast path through a field, however, some privacy concerns have been raised by the owners of a residence along the route. One of the options is to take a diagonal route through the field. Next steps are to ask the Lulworth Estate about this new route. Views on the proposed route are welcome.

Action - Tim Hall to share the map of the Lulworth to Kimmeridge route through the ranges with the group.

The Lulworth to Kimmeridge route is 11-12 km.

The alternative route when the ranges are closed is approx. 32 km, it needs to go round the entire closed off area of the ranges, there is a significant deviation inland, existing access has been used.

The existing paths at Lulworth won't be closed.

TH would be happy to share the information with Cllr Roland Tarr.

Kimmeridge to Highcliffe – An establishment grant is in place for this and works should be complete by March 2025. A route away from the coastal route has been negotiated. Will look to open this stretch of the coast path in quarter one of 2025. Waiting for a secretary of state decision on one section of the route.

Have tried to keep off the roads as much as possible using the public rights of way. Worked with the Highways Teams of the council to avoid busy areas. Would be interested to know how many people plan to walk this section of the route without checking if the ranges are open. Happy to circulate the map of the route with the group.

Action – Tim Hall to circulate the final report and the Section 52 Notice for the Kimmeridge to Highcliffe route.

6. **WILL WOODLANDS - BROOM HILL ESTATE Chris Slade request for permissive path to be dedicated and Open Access land**

Will Woodlands is 400 acres of woodland in the parish of Litton Cheney around North Barton Farm on the northern side of the A35, access is via the Old Roman Road near Eggardon Hill. Request that it is put on the definitive map as access land and footpaths to open it up to the public. The landowner is being searched for.

It was suggested the local councillor could help with this request.

Action – LAF to contact landowner to request addition of Will Woodlands to the definitive map. RG added their contact details to the chat.

7. **West Moors Woodland banning of Horse access Chair FE contact.**

PH has met with the local ranger. Horse riders need to be aware of the sensitivities of local residents in a particular area around the houses which is predominantly for dog walking and recreation. The routes towards the east are areas where you would expect to see equestrians. The equestrians have agreed to avoid areas which get cut up in wet weather.

8. **Dorset Council Greenspace Management & Maintenance – Russell Goff (Greenspace Manager) and Graham Stanley (Senior Ranger) (to include an update on the servicing of the LAF, membership / recruitment, plus general update and the latest on the ROWIP). Restructure Update. You Tube recording yes/no. Piddle Path update.**

Purbeck – Working on ECP improvements ready for opening in 2025.

Moved over 1,000m of coast path further into the farmer's field and fenced, new path being installed to avoid the 3 mile diversion at Hounstout, both of these due to the landslips of last winter

New signage to be installed along coast path.

Cordite Trail (Sandford) was opened up after recognition as PROW, and 12" of mud and water removed, surface improvements are ongoing – eventual desire is to have a bridge of the railway to allow access to the shore edge.

Working with the National Trust, British Horse Society and Ramblers to improve links of footpaths/bridleways to give better off-road options in and around Studland, Swanage and Corfe.

West – Haye Lane bridge on W2/19 Lyme Regis requires Environment Agency approval for any works which will delay replacement.

Productive meeting held with Natural England regarding the England Coast Path establishment in West Dorset, they hope this will be confirmed by the end of the year. The footpath across East Cliff is unlikely to be reopened following geological assessment.

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Proposed bridleway at Chideock is awaiting approval from SGN before work can continue.

Not a lot new to report regarding the Maiden Newton Trailway at the moment, but still progressing.

Spearhaye Lane in Holditch - The Parish Council and FWAG are leading on contacting the landowner, but no updates received on how this is progressing.

Bridge at Three Legged Cross – Waiting for the contractor.

E5411 – Bridleway closed due to the badger set is resolved and re-opened.

North Dorset – Carried out surfacing work on the North Dorset Trailway and rights of way near Stalbridge. Looking at one of the new housing estates to dedicate one of the site's routes as public rights of way.

Piddle Path – Work has been carried out and signed off on the rights of way that were highlighted.

Aspiration to link Chideock to Bridport via a bridleway.

Fleet Lagoon - Using Bird Mitigation Funds to mitigate the impact of people and dogs on the Fleet Lagoon, work is being carried out on paths and walkways to reduce the impact on the bird population.

Rights of way are being affected by heavy rainfall. Dorset Council has been working with the Flood Management Team to slow the water down or redirect it. Will be looking at natural flood management schemes. Working with the National Landscapes Team and the Natural Environment Team.

Around the same number of requests for service have been received by the team as in the previous two years. More jobs have been cleared than requests received this year.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan will be drafted in March - July 2025, consultation on it will take place in August – October 2025, the Plan will be launched in December 2025.

Action – Russell Goff to circulate the Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultation timeline.

The Greenspace Service restructure is due to be finalised by the end of December 2024.

Action – Graham Stanley to contact DLAF members in the New Year to focus on recruitment to the LAF.

It is proposed that the DLAF meeting is no longer recorded on You Tube – Agreed.

The southern extension of the North Dorset Trailway is still in the developmental stage. A crossing is being assessed to bring the trailway across the A350.

Action – Graham Stanley to send Cllr Hadley the North Dorset Trailway assessment once completed.

9. **BCP Council Greenspace Management & Maintenance – Philip Elias (Senior Rights of Way Officer) Presentation.**

Hamworthy Access Project

Ian Alexander of Natural England approached PE re: the creation of existing paths in the area. The scope of work includes opening up access for marginalised groups. PE met with Ian Alexander to look at the paths, Ian will then proceed with the bidding process within Natural England to fund the development of the routes. This would link via the Castleman Trailway. This would be a multi-use route to include equestrians.

AH – Part of the route is in Dorset, it would be good if colleagues in Dorset Council can pick this up.

BCP Council are advertising for another rights of way officer who will run and administrate the Dorset Local Access Forum.

10. **Legal Record Team - Definitive Map & Statement – Vanessa Penny (Definitive Map Manager). Presentation (latest DMMO and path order statistics). Letter sent to the Planning Portfolio Holder regarding the definitive map team backlog, but no reply received to date.**

The Definitive Map Team is fully staffed, Rachel Coburn is now in post to monitor the Definitive Map Team generic inbox.

Portland Railway Cutting update – An order was made to record the route as a bridleway, only one objection was made by the original applicant who wants it to be a footpath not a bridleway, this is being negotiated.

Two DMMOs – A byway at Crabbs Barn Lane, Beaminster and a footpath in Sturminster Newton have been approved.

4 public path orders have been confirmed.

240 DMMO cases have not been started, 214 are from the British Horse Society where the landowner has not been formally notified, there are 26 on the active waiting list.

47 cases are in progress, 2 cases are currently with the Planning Inspectorate, 29 cases are in the queue waiting to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

A public enquiry re: a DMMO in Bradford Abbas is scheduled for Tuesday 10 December 2024 in Committee Room 1, County Hall.

Public path orders:

- 11 cases not started.
- 6 rail crossing orders from Network Rail.
- 34 cases in progress – 10 Town & Country Planning Act cases associated with development, 3 have had orders made and are waiting for works to be carried out by the applicant.
- 1 PPO case with the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1 PPO case waiting to be submitted.

11. **Member feedback from associated groups/meetings**
Note about rights of way and access prepared by Fiona Bowles and Janet Davis for circulation to Local Nature Partnership

There were a number of actions from the last meeting, looking at making people more aware of the LAF.

Landscape recovery schemes – Information on the LAF for farmers. One of the local recovery schemes are carrying out public consultation. Opportunity mapping would be useful for this. They offered to speak with the LAF. How can this information be circulated to the farming groups?

Action – Fiona Bowles to send information on the LAF to Amy Smith in the Nature Recovery Team to circulate to farming groups.

10. **Ratifications**

None.

11. **A.O.B.**

None.

12. **Date of next meeting**

Thursday 24 April 2025, 10:00-13:00 –
Committee Room 2, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/SyZdv7G6JzE>