



The countryside charity
Dorset

Dorset CPRE

29th July 2025

Dorset CPRE response to the Draft Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (DLNRS)

This response is prepared by the Dorset branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). We welcome the opportunity to submit our comments on the Draft Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (DLNRS) and appreciate the hard work that has gone into its preparation. Dorset is a county noted for its biodiversity, landscape quality, and natural heritage including the UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast; however as highlighted in the Dorset Local Nature Partnership's [Natural Value Report 2022](#), nationally and locally biodiversity is in decline. In 2020 only 44% of Dorset's SSSIs were in a favourable condition and 45% of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest were in a good, maintained condition (*Natural Value Report 2022, The State of Dorset's Environment*). As mentioned in the introduction to the DLNRS, as a Nation we are committed to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030, as agreed at COP 15 and set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy has the potential to be instrumental in ensuring that Dorset not only meets but exceeds the ambitious targets agreed at COP 15 particularly if used in conjunction with a land use strategy as consulted on by the Government earlier this year.

To be successful the DLNRS needs to provide a clear roadmap setting out how Nature Recovery on the scale required will actually be achieved. In our opinion the current strategy is largely a visioning document and lacks a description of how the 30by30 targets will be achieved. Key elements that we would like to see clearly communicated in the DLNRS include: -

- A clearly established baseline of the current state of biodiversity in the county against which improvements can be measured. This could take the form of an updated version of the Dorset Local Nature Partnership's Natural Value Report 2022.
- Clearly defined targets, explaining the changes required for 30by30 to be achieved in Dorset.
- Real plans, policies and funding and a timetable outlining targets and monitoring progress.

Whilst we understand that Biodiversity Net Gain Credits are seen as being integral to funding nature recovery, we have serious misgivings about the long-term effectiveness of this strategy to deliver habitat improvements. A recent study for Wild Justice, [Lost Nature](#), by University of Sheffield researchers, published in December 2024 looked at the delivery of ecological commitments by housing developers and found that only half of the ecological enhancements (53%) that had been promised were actually delivered. This fell to a third when newly planted trees were excluded. Biodiversity Net Gain Schemes are required to be in place for 30 years, and to ensure that the promised gains are actually delivered we would like to see a strategy incorporated in the DLNRS for the ongoing, long term monitoring of BNG funded schemes.

We are concerned about the introduction of Environmental Delivery Plans and the Nature Restoration Fund Levy as proposed in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, how this will impact the DLNRS and what this will mean for nature recovery in Dorset. Will the DLNRS include information on those areas subject to Environmental Delivery Plans & Natural England's associated Environmental Improvement Schemes, and how these will be delivered and monitored?

It is essential that development and economic growth in Dorset are planned to take into consideration their impact on the natural environment. It is not evident what weight this document will have in the assessment of potential development sites nor how the DLNRS will be integrated with the emerging Dorset and BCP Local Plans, the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) and other relevant plans (e.g. for transport and other infrastructure.) In particular, there is a possible disconnect between the DLNRS and sites for development as indicated in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and in the prospective appendices to the draft Local Plan. Ideally the proposed housing sites would be overlaid with the LNRS land classification site to establish if the two are compatible.

With regards to the Priorities and Activities listed in the DLNRS, we comment as follows:

- We would like to see a list of the actions that will have the biggest impact in meeting 30by30 in Dorset.
- **Farming** - this is rightly listed as a priority area and should be top of the list!! Globally food production has been cited as being the single greatest threat to biodiversity. Significant changes to farming practices, at a landscape scale (ref: The 'Lawton' Report, [Making Space for Nature](#)) are essential if we are to halt biodiversity loss and meet both Dorset's and the Nation's commitment to achieve our 30by30 targets. This 'Priority' requires much stronger wording to emphasise the critical role that farming has to play in nature recovery.

Fundamental to helping farmers make the change to nature friendly farming practices is education coupled with the right financial incentives. It is essential that these incentives can be trusted to remain in place to give farmers certainty when planning ahead. The importance of a guaranteed funding stream was emphasised earlier this year when the sudden closure of the Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) resulted in many farmers having to abandon their plans to adopt nature friendly farming practices.

- **Urban** - the contribution that increasing the 'Green Infrastructure' in our towns and villages can make to nature recovery should not be under-estimated and in our opinion deserves greater focus in this document. We welcome the recognition of the role that improving existing green space for nature can play, but we would like to see a greater emphasis on creating additional Green Spaces/small parks in our towns.
- **Soils** - greater emphasis should be placed on strategies to improve and maintain our valuable soils which are essential to our existence and provide a habitat in their own right for a large range of microbes, fungi, invertebrates. The importance of our soils was outlined in CPRE's 2018 Report, [Back to the land: rethinking our approach to soil](#). In our opinion soil health deserves to be listed as a priority.
- **Hedgerows** - little mention is made in the DLNRS of the significant contribution that hedgerows can make to nature recovery, providing wildlife corridors and habitats for numerous small mammals, birds and insects. Currently the enhancement and creation of hedgerows is mentioned as a potential activity under Priority 2 - Woodlands, and Priority 3 - Farming. Given the significant contribution that restoring hedgerows can make to meeting 30by30 targets in our opinion they are deserving of being listed as a priority in their own right.
- **Rivers and Streams** - we would like to see greater emphasis placed on the need to reduce pollution entering watercourses for example by managing agricultural inputs and outputs, handling residential greywater and sewerage, road run-off.

The delivery of many of the activities targeted at nature restoration will be carried out by volunteers. The Great Big Dorset Hedge (GBDH) project which aims to restore and extend hedgerows across Dorset is reliant on an army of volunteers to carry out this work. Greater emphasis should be placed on the role volunteers can play in nature restoration together with information on how members of the public can volunteer. We recommend that the GBDH project is included in the DLNRS as a case study as it provides an excellent example of how collaboration between Dorset wide organisations and the general public can achieve nature restoration.

Conclusion

Finally, it will be important that the DLNRS, including in the opening sections, communicates clearly and honestly the challenge – the parlous and deteriorating state of nature in Dorset – and the opportunity – that, with the commitment and support of Dorset people, businesses, communities and other stakeholders, and visitors, the policies can be put in place and the actions can be delivered to help nature recover.

Dorset's biodiversity and natural environment, the county's diverse landscapes, its UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast and marine environment, and the natural environment and habitats of its communities, towns and villages, are not only very special but also central to enabling nature, communities and our economy to thrive and succeed. Dorset people, Dorset Council, BCP Council and organisations like Dorset CPRE, want to keep Dorset special. We encourage all concerned to optimise the Dorset LNRS's contribution to keeping Dorset special and helping Dorset's nature and people to thrive.

Nature recovery is a 360-degree public good – good for our environment and climate, locally and globally, good for our economy and sustainable economic growth, good for communities and for health and wellbeing for all. Such clear, effective, consistent messaging will be vital to securing the public support, policies and resources necessary to delivery.