



Dorset
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State of Nature in Dorset

CPRE Dorset Planning Conference June 2026

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Stock take – headline figures

- 68% decline in vertebrate populations 1970-2016 globally
- Humans account for 36% of mammal biomass
- Domestic livestock 60%
- Wild mammals 4%
- The biomass of poultry is about 3x that of wild birds



State of Nature – national picture

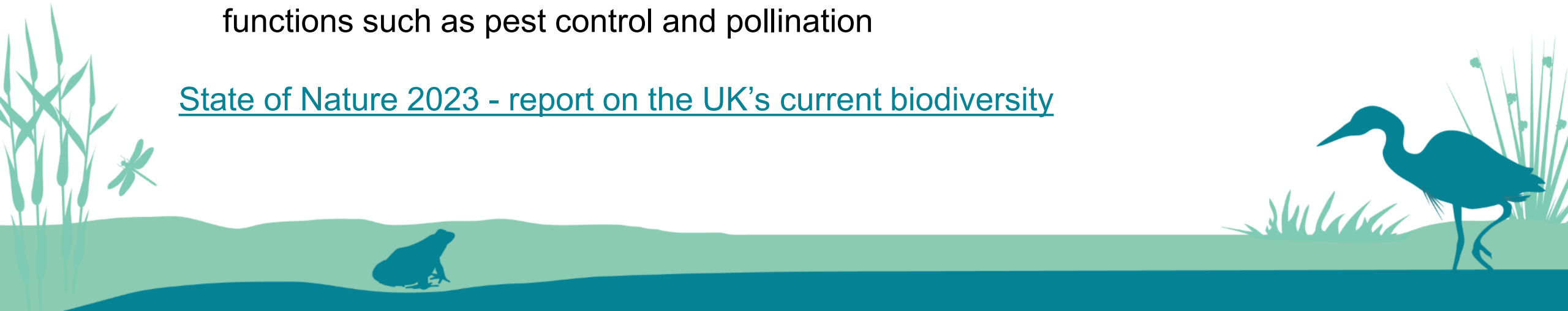
More species have seen their populations decrease than increase

- Species abundance has on average fallen by 19%
- 16% of species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain

We have seen big changes in where wildlife is found

- The distributions of half of flowering plant species have decreased
- The distributions of invertebrates have on average decreased across the UK, with stronger declines in some insect groups which provide key ecosystem functions such as pest control and pollination

[State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#)





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Otters have recovered after historic declines caused by poisoning.
From presence in 6% of survey sites in 1970 to 96% in 2018

How is nature faring in Dorset?



Why is Dorset's natural environment so special?

Dorset has a diverse geology, and in turn some very special places:

- chalk downland and chalk streams
- clay vales with ancient meadows, woodlands and hedges
- sands underlying our heathland and peatland
- our world famous coast with its natural harbours and limestone cliffs
- a diverse marine environment supporting rocky reefs, sea cliffs, sand and gravel bars and seagrass beds



12% of the UK's remaining lowland heathland is in Dorset and the county is a stronghold for our rarest reptiles

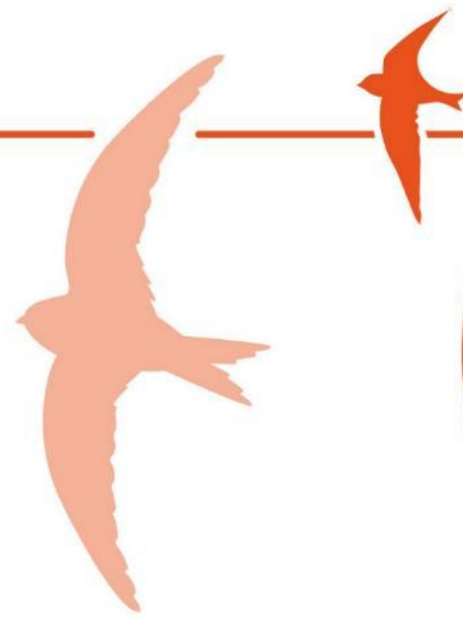
Dorset contains the **10km** square with the richest native plant diversity in Britain & Ireland

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole's urban area has **21%** tree canopy cover



Nature is under threat

- About 1 in 40 species ever recorded in Dorset is now extinct.
- The pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly was lost from Dorset in 2002. Breeding puffins are on the brink of local extinction with only a handful of birds left.
- Only 8% of Dorset's land is legally protected for wildlife, with only just over a third of this in good condition.



- Dorset has 1,049 km of rivers but less than 15% are in good ecological condition.
- Currently 6.4% of Dorset's area is known to be in good condition with nature thriving – a long way from the target of 30% by 2030.



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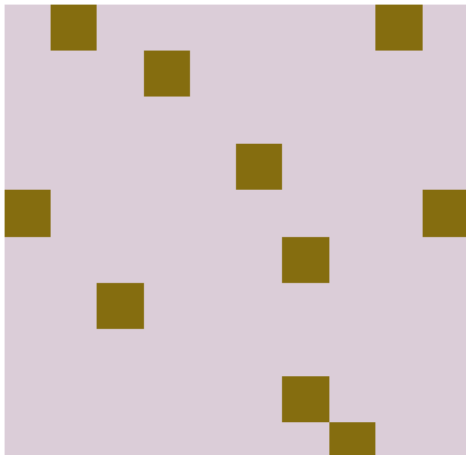
“30 by 30”



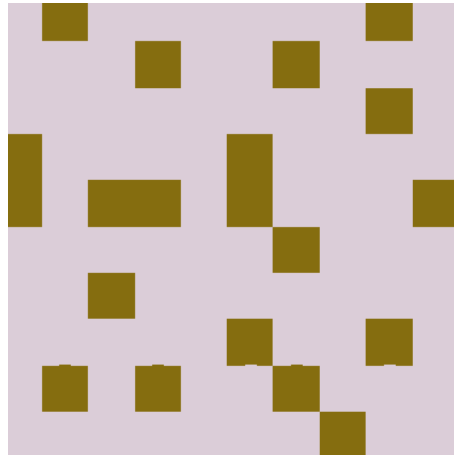
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- UN Global Biodiversity Framework
- 30% of land and sea managed for nature by 2030

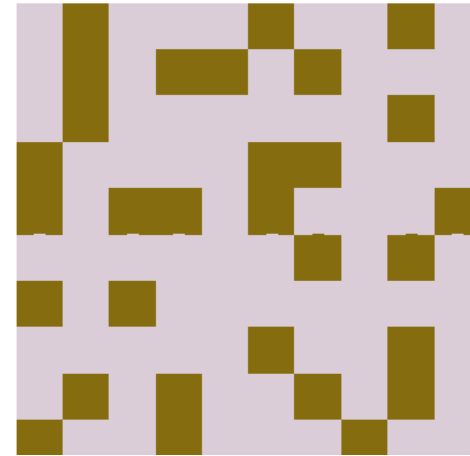
What does 30% look like?



10%



20%



30%

At 30% cover, you start to get much more connectivity and larger continuous areas

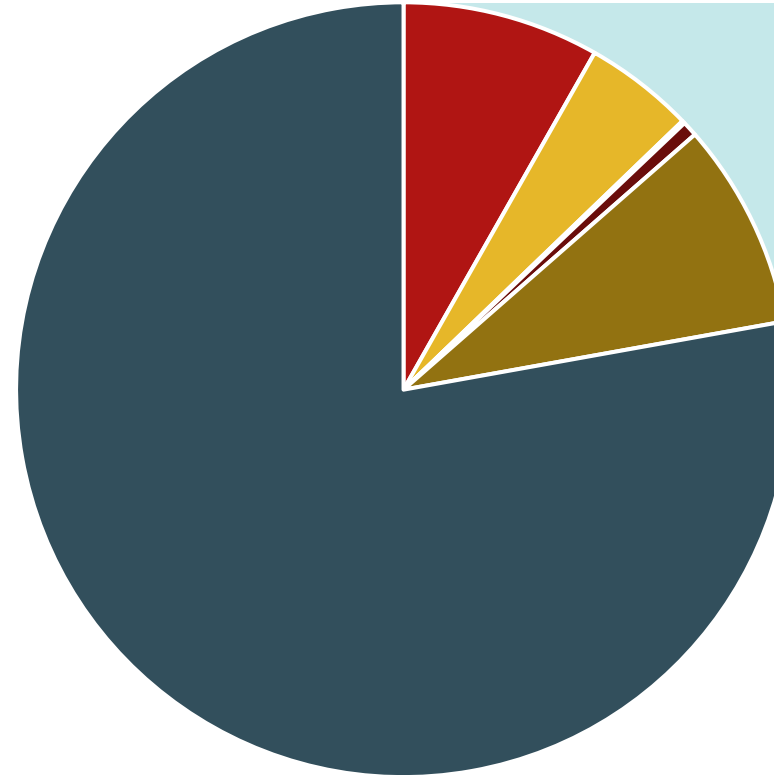




So how are we doing in Dorset?

Dorset & BCP

- SSSI (8%)
- SNCI (5%)
- Nature reserves (undesigned)
- Ancient Woodland (undesigned)
- Ecological Networks (other) (9%)
- Not identified of existing interest (78%)

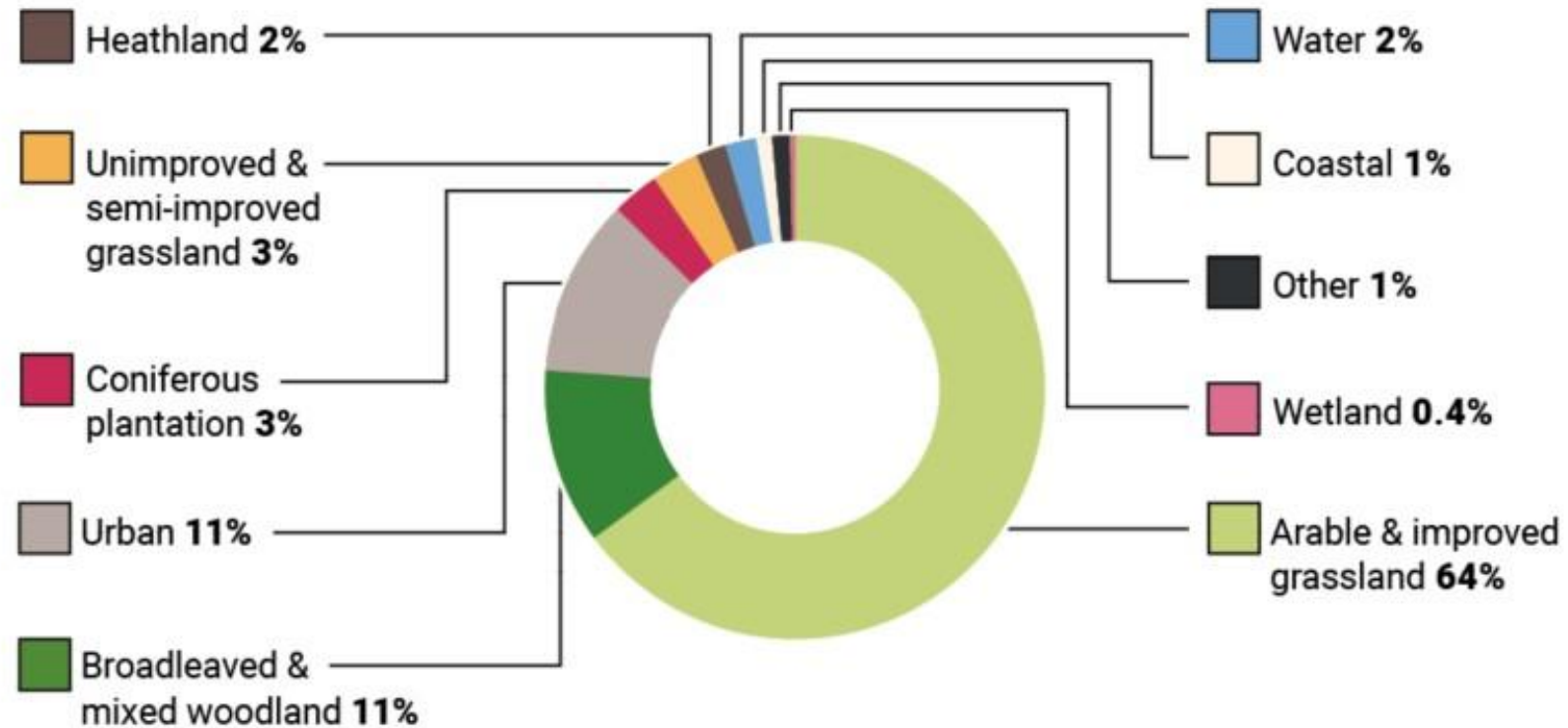


Of this:

- about 6% is known to be in good condition,
- about 6% poor,
- and 10% unknown



Approximate percentage of land cover in Dorset



Source: [Dorset's biodiversity and declines in nature - Dorset Council](#)



What do we need to do?

STOP

Allowing hostile barriers to wildlife
Simplifying the environment
Treating nature as an add-on

START

Creating space for nature everywhere
Aiming for abundance not just survival
Re-connecting everyone with nature



More



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Bigger



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Better



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Joined



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What is happening already?

On the positive side:

- Environment Act
- Agri-environment schemes
- Land use framework
- Green finance

On the other hand:

- Nature being blamed for holding up development
- New harmful legislation
- Environment seen as a political issue



Local Action



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- Partnerships
- Landscape recovery
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy



What you can do to help



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- **Take action in your own community**
- **Look at your own patch**
- **Join with others to have collective impact**
- **Tell your community, councillors, MPs that you care about nature**

For further information



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- [Be a part of nature's recovery in Dorset | Dorset Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Natural Value Report – Dorset Local Nature Partnership](#)
- [State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#)
- [Dorset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Dorset Council](#)
- [Investing in nature could boost UK economy | Valuing Nature Network](#)



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Thank you for listening