

Case Study: Dorset's Natural Influence at its best

Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area (NIA): a step change for a special landscape



Lead Partner: Dorset AONB

Other Partners: Funding partners and signatories to the NIA included Dorset County Council, Natural England, RSPB, National Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West and Kingston Maurward College.

Non funding partners included Wessex Water, Environment Agency, National Farmers Union and CLA.

Project Summary:

The Wild Purbeck NIA aims and vision have been delivered through a broad programme, which could only have been achieved through a diverse partnership, each bringing specific skills, experience and resource to the initiative. Around 25 individual projects were implemented within the following four themes:

Land management and advisory services: Joint land management support and advice to make the best of the land-based economy; building collaboration for habitat creation, management and restoration and join-up across the agricultural 'matrix'.

Community at the centre: A 'community gateway' approach fostering dialogue with rural and urban communities within Purbeck and its neighbouring areas to build a shared understanding of important natural infrastructure and its management needs.

Building resilience through strategic planning and research: Work under this theme informs the efforts of other projects. Collating best data (including spectacular old archives) for use in advisory / restoration services, climate-proofing adaptation plans and visitor management strategies.

Developing the green economy: This builds and facilitates economic opportunities that in themselves conserve and enhance the landscape and wildlife potential of WPNIA e.g. through the promotion of local produce. This theme also includes the development of other income-generating strands which can resource future environmental management and enhancement.



Wild Purbeck partners (Dorset AONB)

Problems / issues and opportunities:

The NIA has provided a huge opportunity for Purbeck. The partnership has achieved a significant step-change in biodiversity and landscape improvements, and people's engagement with their natural heritage. The partnership feels it delivered 10 years' worth of conservation effort during the 3 year NIA funded period between 2012-15.

Overall there were few problems - the scheme was flexible enough to be able to reallocate funding from one project to another if unforeseen problems prevented delivery in a particular year.



Duddle Heath before and after restoration (Dorset AONB)

Outcomes:

Achievements of the Wild Purbeck partnership include:

- Over 13% of the population of Purbeck has been engaged in community, education or other NIA activity
- 124ha of land has been purchased and safeguarded for the future
- 467ha of heathland was restored or managed
- 342ha large grazing unit established
- 7ha Saline Lagoon created
- 19ha new wet woodland created and 88.75ha new woodland created/managed
- 25,000 new biological records for around 2500 species and 7000 new wetland bird records
- Over 20,000 hours of volunteer recorded
- 25 Ha lapwing nesting habitat protected (the reason for the photo of the lapwing)
- 29 parishes taking part in events / activities
- 15 schools, 61 teachers and project staff trained, 1680 young people engaged



Volunteers Spyway Barn Pond (Rachel Janes)

"It's amazing!" Andrew Sells, Chairman of Natural England who visited the Wild Purbeck NIA with Sir John Lawton

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Lapwing (Peter Moore)

How partnership working benefited the project:

An informal partnership existed prior to the NIA. Dorset AONB took a key brokerage role in negotiation, broadening and formalising the partnership. The AONB also led on the bid to Defra's NIA programme. Without the support of all the partners, it would not have been possible to work up the bid or success in the application against stiff competition.

In year 2, an opportunity arose for applying for additional funding. Having a well organised partnership enabled us to secure an additional £300,000 for heathland restoration and management. The partners delivered this within 3 months, a major achievement.

The NIA has also enabled partners to lever in funding they would otherwise have found difficult to access, particularly for land purchase. The project secured £924,013 of national NIA funds leveraging in a further matched/in-kind funding of over £1.8million.

The Partnership has continued to meet and coordinate activities beyond the end of the Defra NIA funding.



Forest school activities (Dorset Forest Schools)