

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2023** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor T Foster (Town Mayor)

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Councillor B Trite (from 2.40 p.m.)

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam (from 2.17p.m.)

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Mr D Pratten

Beach Buddies and Planet Purbeck

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Mrs S Spurling

Sustainable Swanage

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager (VSBDM)

Mrs J Moulder

Business Development Support

Officer

Ms G Percival

Assets & Compliance Manager

Mr M Snowdon

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

There was one representative of the press present at the meeting.

### **Public Participation Time**

There were no matters raised.

#### **1) Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Harris, Tracey Churcher (National Trust), Brian Bleese (Dorset Wildlife Trust) and Katie Black (Durlston Country Park). Councillor Monkhouse attended the meeting remotely.

#### **2) Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

No declarations were made on this occasion.

#### **3) Matters arising from the Meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

There were no matters raised on this occasion.

Councillor Whitwam entered the meeting at 2.17pm

4) **Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030: Council Buildings**

Further to Minute No. 4 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager presented a revised version of the Council's Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030: Council Buildings. It was reported that investigations have continued with the assistance of building management system engineers and Low Carbon Dorset regarding the potential utilisation of LED Lighting, Building Management Systems (BMS), Solar Panels and Heat Pumps to meet the targets as set out in the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030.

It was noted that specialist advice had been received, indicating that due to the hours of operation and construction type, the only building suitable for a BMS would be the Town Hall and this would only provide a small benefit to efficiency. Therefore, until further information is received, BMSs have been excluded from the Action Plan.

It was further reported that Low Carbon Dorset had provided positioning and installation guidance regarding Solar Panels which indicated that solar panels would not be suitable for Swanage Information Centre, beach huts or public conveniences, although they would be feasible at the Operations Department Depot and Beach Gardens Pavilion.

The cost of installing solar panels in the two remaining viable locations, together with LED lighting to all sites, was estimated to be in the region of £100,000. Attention was drawn to the potential availability of a match-funding grant of up to £75,000 from Low Carbon Dorset, which, together with the Town Council's allocated capital budget of £50,000, could enable the LED lighting and Solar Panel works to be completed during the 2023-24 financial year.

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That a procurement of LED Lighting in Council Buildings and Solar Panels for Beach Gardens Pavilion and the Operations Department Depot should be undertaken, on the condition that the work is part-funded by Low Carbon Dorset and the work is implemented in the 2023-24 financial year.

An update was provided regarding the use of heat pumps. Low Carbon Dorset had advised that heat pump technology could be deployed at the Town Hall, albeit with limited efficiency given the size of the building. The cost of installing Heat Pumps in the Town Hall, Operations Depot and Swanage Information Centre was estimated to be in the region of £175,000. The Council had been advised that the existing gas boilers in these buildings had a reasonable lifespan remaining, with appropriate ongoing maintenance work. This time could be used to enable the Town Council to save towards the cost of introducing heat pumps over the next seven years in order to meet its 2030 target. It was proposed by Councillor Whitwam, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To recommend to the Finance and Governance Committee that £25,000 be allocated to a capital reserve for each year from 2024/25 to 2030/31, in order to fund the £175,000 estimated cost of installing heat pumps, in order to facilitate the decarbonisation of the Town Council's buildings.

After a brief further discussion, during which the difficulty of meeting the Town Council's carbon neutral target for 2030 was acknowledged, it was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To review the Town Council's approach towards achieving carbon neutrality at the next Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting.

**5) Electric Vehicle Charging in Town Council Car Parks**

Further to Minute No. 7 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager provided an update regarding preparation that had been undertaken in order to submit a grant application to Dorset Council's "Charging Ahead" scheme to fund the installation of additional electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) in the Town Council's car parks. It was noted that the aim of the funding is to provide relatively easy access to EV charging for residents who are unable to charge their car at their own property. The installation would also be part funded by Mer, the owner of the charging machines.

A feasibility study, undertaken by the EVCP installation company JoJu, had indicated that nine machines could be installed at no cost to Swanage Town Council, thereby providing 18 charging spaces. This would include 22 kwh chargers situated in Main Beach and North Beach Car Parks and 50 kwh chargers at Mermond Place Car Park.

The proposal was welcomed by members of the committee and it was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To prepare and submit a Charging Ahead grant application to Dorset Council as soon as possible, on the basis that the decision as to whether to accept any grant offer is reserved to full Council, after taking into consideration legal advice on the procurement process, the licence agreement and grant acceptance letter.

Attention was drawn to the fact that one of the grant requirements is the provision of free overnight parking for vehicles using the charging machines. It was **AGREED:**

That a review of overnight parking charges for Electric Vehicles using charging machines within Swanage Town Council Car Parks should be carried out at the next meeting of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee.

It was further reported that the feasibility study had examined the possibility of providing charging machines for electric bicycles, although these could not be funded by the Charging Ahead grant. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that to include this as part of the proposal would require the installation of covered areas at an additional cost to Swanage Town Council. Therefore, after a brief discussion, it was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the installation of electric bicycle charging should not be taken forward at the present time.

It was noted that there are several constraints which will be placed on Swanage Town Council if the decision is taken to accept the Charging Ahead grant and enter into a licence agreement with the charging machine owner. One of these constraints would be the charging machine owner has a 15-year exclusivity guarantee. Were the Town Council to wish to withdraw from the agreement prior to the end of the 15-year term then financial penalties would also apply. Due to the licence agreement being negotiated by Dorset Council, it was understood that these terms and conditions would have to be agreed to as part of accepting the grant.

Finally, attention was drawn to the aim of the Charging Ahead scheme to make EVCPs available to residents and it was noted that, in the future, proposals might be brought forward for other locations in the town.

## 6) **Sustainable Swanage - Update**

An update was provided on the activities of Sustainable Swanage since the last meeting of the committee.

- Planet Purbeck had provided £1,500 in funding to enable the provision of nature-based learning activities. Some of this has been used to establish free natural history courses, including a recent tree course with more to be organised in spring 2024.
- A Dorset Green Homes event had been well received with over 30 visits so far. Some of the visitors had gone on to apply changes to their own homes.
- The recent open evening about the Swan Brook had been a success, including a talk from the Environment Agency and over 50 attendees.
- Potential collaboration between the National Trust, Dorset AONB and Planet Purbeck is due to be discussed at an upcoming meeting in October 2023 to identify nature monitoring activities that the community can undertake.
- The Repair Café has secured a location to operate from and has received a lot of support and guidance from the Wimborne Repair Café.
- The newly formed Friends of the Downs group will be meeting soon to discuss topics such as seed sowing and plug planting.
- It was noted that during the Planet Purbeck festival there had been multiple short featurettes and films shown to 380 people. One feature focussed on the Downs and Swanage Town Council was thanked for securing the designation of Local Nature Reserve for this location.

The Chairman wished to record the committee's thanks to Sustainable Swanage for all their work over recent months.

## 7) **Swanage Greenspaces update**

### a) **Swanage Greenspace Strategy Proposal**

The Assets and Compliance Manager highlighted the fact that Swanage Town Council manages a diverse selection of greenspaces with different uses and varying management plans. Attention was drawn to the benefits of developing a Swanage Greenspace Strategy to provide a strategic framework for the management and development of these spaces. This would establish guiding principles for all Council greenspaces and provide greater public transparency on the Council's principles and standards in respect of greenspaces, as well as clearly defining future priorities. It may also assist in attracting external funding to further enhance the greenspaces and encourage more public utilisation. This would require public consultation.

It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and  
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY :

That a Greenspace Strategy be prepared to provide a strategic framework for the management and development of greenspaces owned and managed by the Town Council.

It was noted that this work would be overseen by this Committee, with the final strategy being approved by the Council.

### b) **Perennial, seasonal and tree planting 2023**

Further to Minute No. 7) of the Environment Committee meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the Assets and Compliance Manager provided an update with regards to the implementation of a more environmentally beneficial approach to planting.

It was reported that by increasing the number of perennial plants used, the number of summer bedding plants required was reduced from approximately 4,200 to 2,000. Feedback from the public had been positive. Members were informed that it is proposed to continue with this approach during 2024 so that, over time, as the perennials establish themselves further, the reliance on summer bedding plants will continue to be reduced.

Additional planting within the current works schedule included planting 90 metres of native hedgerow within Godlingston Cemetery and wildflower plug and seed planting across several locations. 36 trees have been purchased with additional trees sourced from the Council's tree nursery and from donations by local residents in cases where trees had outgrown their current location.

Councillor Trite entered the meeting at 2.40pm

**8) Update on Environmental Matters**

**a) Green Energy Contract**

The committee was advised that Council had agreed to enter into a Green Energy Contract to procure electricity from a 100% renewable energy supplier (see Minute No. 109(b) of the Council meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023).

**b) Environmental Action Plan**

It was reported that a review of the Environmental Action Plan had not been included on the agenda for this meeting due to the ongoing progress of many items. A review will be carried out at the next meeting.

**9) Budget 2024–25 - One off budget proposals**

Consideration was given to a briefing note that provided details of three revenue and one capital expenditure items proposed for inclusion in the Town Council's environment budgets for the 2024-25 financial year, as follows:

One-off significant revenue expenditure items:

- Prince Albert Gardens Footpaths - £40,000 to Repair and reinstate footpath surfacing which has seen significant deterioration in a large proportion of areas.
- King Georges Playing Field - £2,600 to install a Water Refill point on the wall of the Main Beach Car Park to support users of the Car Park, playground and skatepark.
- Climate Crisis Training - £2,500 to provide training to all staff and Councillors (Action 1.5 of the Environmental Action Plan)

Capital budget:

- Reserve to decarbonise the Council's gas boilers and replace with heat pumps by 2030 as per the Climate Crisis 2019 declaration discussed above, under Minute No. 4.

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Tomes and  
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the one-off and capital budget expenditure items listed above be taken forward to the next meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25.

**10) Waste Management**

**a) Update on Activities from Beach Buddies**

The representative of Beach Buddies provided an update on the group's recent activities. The twice weekly cleans held on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings continued across the summer, although the Tuesday evening sessions ceased at the end of September due to the darker evenings.

It was reported that across the last nine months, 55 beach cleans had been carried out, clearing over 800kg of debris and litter. On occasions when there was a surplus of volunteers, cleaning operations had been extended inland to include prominent areas of the town. Additionally, volunteers are deployed during some of the events hosted in the town to assist the council workforce in managing the increased amount of waste created.

**b) Update on Activities from Swanage Landers**

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on recent activities, which had become more reactive due to limited availability. The High Street had been a focus, especially during the spring, and Victoria Avenue verge is planned to be the next area tackled.

It was reported that four weeks ago, the A351 was attended as notification had been received that the grass was due to be cut. A second sweep was due to be conducted now the grass had been cut. The primary items found this year had been disposable vapes and aluminium cans; all cans were subsequently recycled.

The main focus of the Swanage Landers had been supporting the periodic road sweeps arranged and funded by the Town Council. It was felt that it would be prudent to conduct another sweep due to Dorset Council treating weeds in several locations four weeks ago.

The Chairman wished to record the committee's thanks to both Beach Buddies and Swanage Landers for their hard work over recent months.

**11) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas**

**a) St Marks Playing Field – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 event and next steps.**

The Assets and Compliance Manager reported that since the picnic in the park event on 1<sup>st</sup> May, the field had continued to be used informally. A recent meeting had been held between the Assets and Compliance Manager, Sustainable Swanage, and Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust about management of this space, and a meeting had been scheduled for the Sports, Leisure and Wellbeing working party on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to further discuss the public feedback received and the future use of this area.

**b) Domestic food waste collections**

Councillor Foster raised the issue that many blocks of flats within Swanage do not benefit or have access to food waste collections despite being assured by Dorset Council that all households should have such access. She had volunteered to work on how best to remedy this issue and will bring forward a report to a future meeting.

**12) Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The Meeting closed at 3.05 p.m.

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## Swanage Town Council

**DRAFT Environment Policy Action Plan****Version 10**

The draft Environment Policy agreed by Council in March 2020 provided six distinct policy areas and, in the sections below, the actions have been categorised under each of these. Swanage Town Council have taken the approach of producing a short action plan with a small number of key actions that can be developed quickly. This is seen very much as an iterative action plan that can grow and develop as we better understand what is required to meet the challenges of the climate crisis. Completed actions are retained at the bottom of the document.

**1. Managing the Town Council in an environmentally sustainable manner**

We shall ensure that sustainability is at the heart of how we manage the Town Council and its functions.

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required	How will we measure this?	Progress to date	Officer
1.	Review vehicle & equipment needs and where possible move to electric machines.	Equipment asset list to be reviewed and options for change considered.	Not known	March 2023	Review undertaken.	DONE - Officers to produce asset list of machines, including power source, during 2022/23 and take report to Committee at the end of 2023.	OPS1
2.	Develop an environmental monitoring system for the Town Council's business which includes tracking carbon use.	System to be set up and managed by officers.	None	March 2023	System set up.	DONE: The Council publishes annually usage for the following: gas, electricity, waste tonnages, petrol, diesel, and water.	OPS1
3.	Develop a system to monitor the Council's waste streams and undertake review.	Identify waste streams and review options for reduction.	Not known	June 2023	Waste tonnages monitored through Management System.	DONE – Linked to 2 above.	OPS1

4.	Reduce the amount of paper documents printed by the Town Council	Review printing volumes and work towards reducing, beginning with introduction of councillor laptops.	Total not known. Budget for Councillor s' laptops agreed.	June 2023	Monitor through Environment Management System	DONE – Laptops have now been procured and training provided to Councillors. Printed copies of Council reports are no longer issued to Councillors.	TH1
5.	Provide climate crisis training for all STC staff and councillors.	External providers.	Not known	2023	Course undertaken.	Various options are being considered and a report will be brought to the Environment Committee. It is felt that training should be undertaken after the councillor elections in May 2024.	TIC1
6.	Move to a fully renewable energy contract for the electric supply to the Town Council	Reviewing green options and undertaking a procurement exercise.	-	October 2023	New contract set up.	DONE – Fully renewable energy contract is now in place – Sep 2023.	TH3

## 2. Managing our built environment sustainably

We are directly responsible for both historic and modern buildings and infrastructure which will be managed sustainably

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required	How will we measure this?	Progress to date	Officer
1.	Implement energy reduction measures.	Produce report which details various possible measures.	Not known	March 2024	Energy use reduction will be tracked by officers	Solar panels and LEDs are being procured for the Beach Gardens Pavilion and Council's Depot. Installation in first half of 2024.	OPS1
2.	Consider options for renewable energy on the Town Council estate.	Undertake research and produce report.	Not known	March 2024	Report produced detailing relevant options.	DONE: Solar Panels are being procured..	OPS1 / TIC1

3.	Consider options for reducing water use and harvesting rainwater.	Report detailing water use and proposals to reduce.	Not Known	Oct 24	Reduction in water use as measured by water bills		OPS1
4.	Ensure all new Town Council constructions have sustainability embedded in their design.	Included in each specification.	Not known	Ongoing	All construction specifications will include sustainability.	ONGOING	TH1

### 3. Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

We are directly responsible for a wide range of natural environments and shall work to enhance these and look to support initiatives that enhance other natural areas within the town

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required	How will we measure this?	Progress to date	Officer
1.	Review options to reduce or eliminate pesticide/herbicide use.	Current use will be reviewed and alternatives considered.	Not known	March 2023	By monitoring amount used.	DONE - Report provided to February Committee detailing current use and explanation of some available alternatives. Committee agreed to continue current approach and review in the future	OPS1
2.	Reduce quantity of bedding plants and develop more drought resistant plantings.	Planting more drought resistant plants.	Not known	June 2023	Reduction in water use and more hardy plants	DONE - Trial of more drought-resistant plantings is ongoing.	OPS1
3.	Undertake a 'bio-diversity' audit of all sites owned by the Town Council to assess their importance within the natural environment.	Volunteers could be used from Sustainable Swanage depending on type of work required.	Not known	March 2024	A map demonstrating high, medium or low bio-diverse areas which might include proposals for improvements	The Council are considering a Greenspaces Strategy which will encompass this.	OPS1
4.	Identify two further sites to be enhanced by Sustainable Swanage	Work with Sustainable Swanage to develop plans	Not known	March 2024	Action Plan developed and work undertaken at sites	Northbrook Copse and the former St Mark's Playing Field identified for enhancement. For Northbrook Copse a management plan and public signage has been produced.	OPS1

5.	Work with partners to implement actions identified within the Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy.	Identify areas within Strategy that can be developed.	Not known	March 2024	Action Plan developed	ONGOING – Need to develop Action Plan for Committee. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is included in the Purbeck Local Plan and will be reviewed during the current preparation of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan.	OPS1 / TIC 1
6.	Continue to plant trees according to the Swanage Tree Strategy and Policy (approved November 2022) generally with 30 planted each year.	Areas identified and trees planted.	Not known	On-going	Number of trees planted.	ONGOING – 29 trees were planted by STC in 2020 with a further 20 planted by Dorset Council in partnership with Sustainable Swanage. 26 trees were planted in 2021-22 alongside new grasses, shrubs, and bushes. During 2022, Tree Strategy and Policy were approved by Full Council.	OPS1

#### 4. Encouraging, educating and embedding environmental best practice

We shall work with the community and other stakeholders to encourage environmental best practice

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required	How will we measure this?	Progress to date	
1.	Support Dorset Waste Services to increase the household recycling rate across Swanage.	Support the education teams at DWS, including about composting and food waste.	None	Ongoing	Positive feedback from DWS.	ONGOING - Work with Sustainable Swanage to promote household recycling. (FareShare and Community Pantry)	TIC1
2.	Recommend that all new constructions in Swanage are built according to sustainable criteria.	Include recommendation in all responses.	None	Ongoing	Increase in new builds built according to sustainable criteria.	ONGOING - May be included in the Design Code in the draft Swanage Neighbourhood Plan	TH2
3.	Continue to support Sustainable Swanage and other partners to deliver	Through funding Sustainable Swanage Officer for 2 days a	£20,000 per annum	Ongoing	Successful projects being delivered through	ONGOING - Costs included in 2023-24 budget with agreement to fund this role for 2 years.	TIC1

community based environmental improvements.	week, oversight, and management of staff time.			Sustainable Swanage and its sub-groups.		
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## 5. Protecting local infrastructure

By working with the community and stakeholders we shall strive to protect and enhance local infrastructure to retain a vibrant and sustainable town.

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required	How will we measure this?	Progress to date	
1.	Develop Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy to increase the number of charging facilities in STC car parks.	Consider options and bring a report to Committee.	Not known	July 2023	Chargers installed.	ONGOING - STC is working with Dorset Council to deliver the Charging Ahead scheme in three car parks in Swanage – hopefully will be in place by summer 2024	TIC1
2.	Support businesses in their efforts to be more sustainable	Working with Sustainable Swanage to provide information and support to businesses	None	Ongoing	Positive feedback from businesses.	All new leases between Swanage Town Council and its business partners include a section on environmental considerations. Sustainable Swanage works with businesses to identify effective ways to provide support.	TIC1
3.	Support, where possible, the establishment of a community bus in Swanage.	Review options around a community bus for Swanage	Not yet known	Ongoing	Options exist around improving the route of the Durlston Bus but a community bus serving the whole community could take some time to develop.	ONGOING – Discussion was being held with the Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust during early 2023. Unsure what the current situation is.	TIC1
4.	Campaign to ensure essential services are retained in Swanage in accordance with the Swanage Local Plan, to	By working with SPDT Dorset Council, P-TAG, and other relevant organisations, such as DCCG, and supporting	None	Ongoing	By recording and reviewing the actions undertaken and reporting to Full Council.	ONGOING – Working in partnership with SPDT on developing the Chapel Lane community services. Working with other groups such as Wellbeing Swanage and will be included within the draft Neighbourhood Plan.	TH1

	minimise travel requirements.	community initiatives to maintain services.					
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## 6. Supporting Sustainable Tourism

We shall support the town's tourism economy through the promotion of sustainable tourism

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required	How will we measure this?	Progress to date	
1.	Enhance the beach 'toy bank' to include a provision at the Ocean Bay end of the beach.	Identify a solution and implement it.	Not known	July 2023	Enhanced Toy Bank in place.	Beach Toy Bank currently successful at the Information Centre. Will engage with North Beach partners in 2024.	TIC1
2.	Develop a sustainable tourism vision.	Work with stakeholders to develop a vision of what a sustainable destination might mean for Swanage.	£0	November 2023	Report to Tourism Committee.	ONGOING - This has been built into the Marketing Strategy that the Marketing Working Group are developing and includes the launch of the new Visit Swanage website.	TIC1
3.	Promote sustainable transport and walking in and around the town to reduce the need for visitors to use cars.	Look at alternative forms of transport and promote these on website and digital media.	-	Ongoing	Customer feedback and uptake.	ONGOING - Sustainable Swanage's Active Travel sub group has now disbanded due to lack of volunteers.	TIC1
4.	Enhance electric facilities on event fields and the market site to eliminate the requirement for fossil fuelled generators.	Report produced detailing costs of upgrades to sites.	Not known	Ongoing	Upgrades undertaken	ONGOING - Two electric points installed and in use at the market site.  Further work required for PAG and Sandpit Field – to be included in the Phase 2 Seafront Development.	OPS1

## Completed Actions

No.	Action	How will we do this	Cost	Date required by	How will we measure this?	Responsible Committee	Progress to date	
1.5	Make climate impact a determinant in all grant giving.	Add section to grant application form.	None	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	Revised application form	Full Council	COMPLETE – Criteria now included within application form.	NIKI
2.1	Undertake an energy audit of all Town Council buildings and identify ways to reduce energy consumption.	Review options to procure a consultancy to undertake this work.	£2,000	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	A report will be produced once complete	Operations	COMPLETE - A report was procured which provided a range of options for the installation of LED bulbs and solar panels across the Council's estate. This will be incorporated in further work being undertaken by the Council in 2022-23.	CULVIN
3.5	Develop The Downs as a Local Nature Reserve.	Continue to work with Sustainable Swanage to deliver this.	Not yet known	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	Nature Reserve established	Operations	COMPLETE - Customer survey released in January. Sustainable Swanage Open Meeting in early 2021. A Management Plan is complete.	OPS1
5.1	Support a Rights of Way survey to encourage walking in the area	Identify solution and work with partners or other stakeholders	£250	Summer 2021	Survey completed with areas for improvement identified. STC will present findings to Dorset Council for implementation, if necessary	Operations	COMPLETE – Survey complete, Rights of Way Open Meeting on 21 <sup>st</sup> June 2022 – setting up volunteer hub to undertake grading of ROWs.	TIC1
6.3	All events held on Town Council land to be single use plastic free	No single use plastic will be permitted	£0	Nov 2021	No single use plastic in use	Tourism	COMPLETE - 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2021 - Full Council confirmed that all events should now be single use plastic free	TIC1

6.5	Enhance the supply of free drinking water solutions across the town	Produce signage for current drinking water taps to make them more obvious and consider if any further are required	Budgeted in 2020-21	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	Signage implemented	Tourism	COMPLETE - Signs have been added to all drinking water taps to make them more visible.  A water refill station has been installed on the seafront; part funded by a grant from 'Sea Changers'.	TIC1 / OPS1
6.6	Work with event organisers to ensure that sustainability is embedded into their events	All event applications to detail what positive and negative impacts their events will have on the local environment	£0	Immediate	Event application form updated	Tourism	COMPLETE - All events during 2021 were required to complete an 'Environmental Impact Assessment'. These will be reviewed at year end and a report produced	TIC 1

## Swanage Central Beach Water Quality Overview

Produced by Swanage Town Council – January 2024

### Introduction

Swanage Town Council is the owner of Swanage Central beach which stretches from the Mowlem Theatre to the Ulwell Stream at Ocean Bay. Currently water quality classification at this location is 'Excellent'.

### Sources of poor water quality in Swanage Bay

Water quality samples are taken weekly by the Environment Agency between May and September at a point located near the RNLI Lifeguard Kiosk/Walrond Road – see Appendix 1 for a map of the location.

Data is reported on various websites (see the table at the bottom of this document) and entered onto the 'Beach Information Board' outside the Swanage Information Centre.

The majority of sewers in England are "combined sewers" and carry both sewage and surface water from roofs and drains. A 'storm overflow' operates during heavy rainfall when the sewerage system becomes overwhelmed by the amount of surface water. The overflow acts in the same way as an overflow on a bath and prevents sewage from backing up pipes and flooding properties and gardens. An 'emergency overflow' will operate very infrequently, for example due to pump failure or blockage in the sewerage system.

The quality of bathing water at Swanage Central Beach can be affected by storm overflows from four different locations.

The location of storm overflows in Swanage are as follows:

1. Ocean Bay – Storm overflow
2. Marine Parade x 2 outlets – Storm overflow (these seem to rarely, if ever, be used)
3. Herston Cross – Storm overflow (usually one or two releases a year)
4. Peveril Point (170m out to sea) – Storm overflow

### Water quality incidents

During the bathing season (May to September), Swanage Town Council receives daily advice from the Environment Agency regarding the potential of poor water quality, which is mainly concerned with the Ulwell Stream storm overflow as this is situated in the 'bathing area' but this also accounts for such issues as farm 'run off'.

In addition to the daily Environment Agency advice, the Town Council receives email notification each time a spill occurs at the Ulwell Stream storm overflow and these are listed in the table below along with the number of occasions that advice was received from the Environment Agency.

The Town Council collects the following information during the year. It should be noted that on some occasions a spill may last for only a few minutes, but other times may be for a few hours, thus 'minutes of spill' is just as important to appreciate as the 'no of spills' during the year.

## Spills and advisory sign deployment recorded by Swanage Town Council.

For the purposes of this table, the year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Year	No. of spills – winter (Wessex Water alerts)	No. of spills – summer (Wessex Water alerts)	Total Minutes of spills (Wessex Water alerts)	No. of days affected (Wessex Water alerts)	No. of days signs deployed advising against bathing (Environment Agency advice)
2020-21	16	6	1398	14	5
2021-22	8	5	340	7	6
2022-23	8	5	749	8	5

Please see Appendix 2 for a breakdown of these figures.

## What action do the Town Council take in a water quality incident?

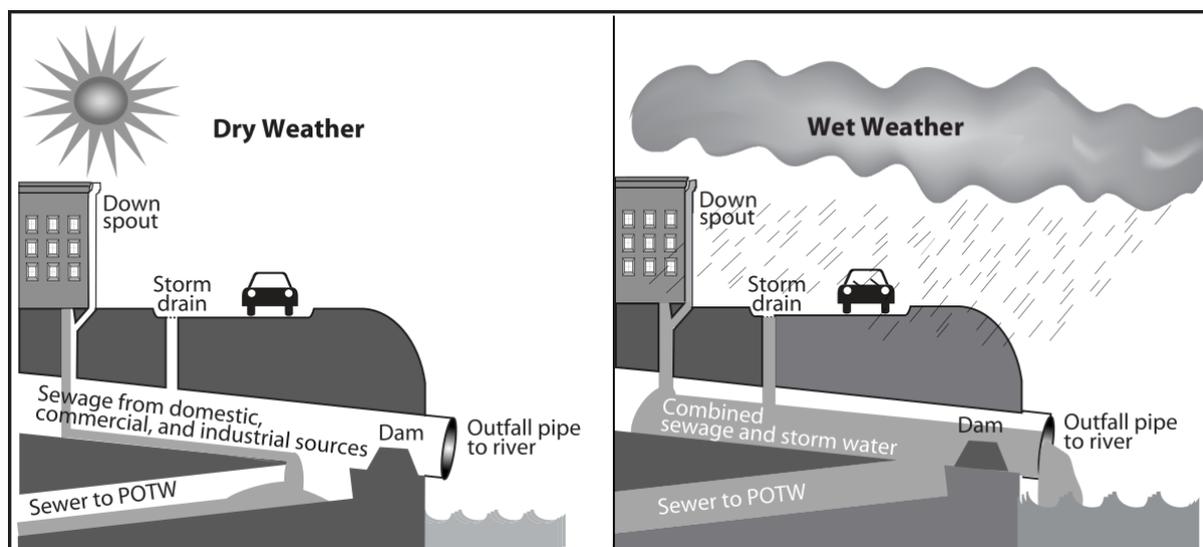
Each day during the bathing season (May to September), the Town Council receive an email and text message from the Environment Agency advising if 'Signs advising against bathing' should be displayed. The Environment Agency makes a daily pollution risk forecast at this site based on the effects of rain, tide and seasonality on bathing water quality. These factors affect the levels of bacteria that get washed into the sea from livestock, sewage and urban drainage via rivers and streams and how they disperse. When these factors combine to cause a temporary reduction in water quality, the Environment Agency will issue a pollution risk warning to Swanage Town Council as part of the daily email and text service.

On these occasions Swanage Town Council will place warning signs out at all beach access points owned by the Town Council. Signs are usually required to remain in place for 24 hours although this can be longer. It should be noted that not all incidents lead to warning notices as on these occasions they are either outside the bathing period (May to September) or the incidents do not meet the thresholds defined by the Environment Agency as stated above. This might be because there has been a spill perhaps lasting for a very short time.

## How will such incidents affect the Blue Flag criteria?

The Town Council applies for the Blue Flag qualification on an annual basis each January. The qualification includes a number of factors such as facilities and accessibility, but water quality remains the most important aspect. Currently Swanage Central Beach is classed as 'Excellent', and this is based on the weekly water sampling undertaken during the bathing season. The results show that while there were some minor peaks in poor water quality (with 2019 being more notable), water quality quickly returned to the normal level. Appendix three shows the detail for this. It should be noted that there is no correlation between incidents and sampling, as sampling is undertaken by the Environment Agency on a routine basis at a location near the Lifeguard kiosk. The weekly results can be found on the Environment Agency website below.

## How does a Combined Sewer work?



POTW – Publicly owned treatment works

## Why do different websites show different numbers of alerts?

Wessex Water have explained the following: “We also provide information to Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) for use on their SaferSeas App. Every year, SAS produce a report which is based on the ‘notification alerts’ they receive. Unfortunately, this data can be misleading as the alerts do not always reflect storm overflow use. There can also be false alarms triggered by wildlife or mobile communication issues.

For example, according to SAS, our overflow at Poole Shore Road sewage pumping station was in use around 290 times during a 12-month period. In actual fact, the overflow was used six times during the 2021 bathing water season and 41 times over the 12-month period, with most of these events being during the wetter months of the year. This is because the overflow, which releases stormwater 0.5km offshore when in use, triggers an alert every time the pump operates, which could be several times during one event. “

The key point is that all the various websites use the same ‘core information’, which is provided by Wessex Water and regularly audited by the Environment Agency.

## Banjo Pier

The Banjo Pier was constructed in the 1990s as part of the Swanage flood alleviation scheme. Water flows from the hills along the Swan Brook and passes alongside King George’s Park before exiting near the Mowlem. When the amount of water passing along the Swan Brook reaches a certain level, the additional water is directed along a tunnel under Victoria Avenue and passes out to sea at the Banjo Pier. During the summer, sometimes the pier emits a slightly unsavoury smell. This is rotting seaweed which has been pushed into the tunnel by high tides and which has no easy way of escaping. Banjo Pier has no connection with sewers and is operated by the Environment Agency.

## Where to find further information?

Environment Agency - Bathing Water Information and weekly water sampling data	<a href="http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?site=ukk2204-19800">http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?site=ukk2204-19800</a>
Wessex Water Coastwatch alerts	<a href="https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/coastwatch">https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/coastwatch</a>
Surfers Against Sewage – records number of alerts	<a href="https://www.sas.org.uk/map/">https://www.sas.org.uk/map/</a>
The Rivers Trust – records alerts and number of hours	<a href="https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e834e261b53740eba2fe6736e37bbc7b">https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e834e261b53740eba2fe6736e37bbc7b</a>

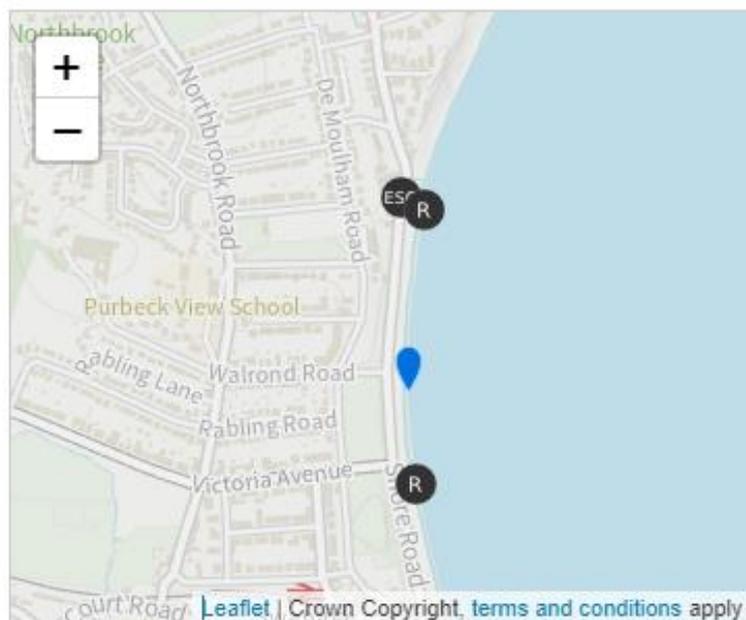
Culvin Milmer

Visitor Services and Business Development Manager  
Swanage Town Council

January 2024

### Appendix 1 – Location of water sampling point and Storm Overflow at Ulwell Stream/Ocean Bay

[Bathing water profile \(data.gov.uk\)](#)



-  Bathing water sampling location
-  Treated Sewage Works Outfall
-  River or Stream Intersection
-  Emergency or Storm Overflow

**Appendix 2 – Data collected by Swanage Town Council regarding spills form the Ocean Bay CSO**

<b>2020 to 2021</b>	<b>No. of spills (WW)</b>	<b>Minutes of spills (WW)</b>	<b>No. of days affected (WW)</b>	<b>No. of days signs deployed advising against bathing (EA)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> October 2020 to 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	16	1267	9	0
1 <sup>st</sup> May 2021 to 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	6	131	5	5
<b>Total for year</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1398</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>No. of spills (WW)</b>	<b>Minutes of spills (WW)</b>	<b>No. of days affected (WW)</b>	<b>No. of days signs deployed advising against bathing (EA)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	8	228	4	0
1 <sup>st</sup> May 2022 to 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	5	112	3	6
<b>Total for year</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>2022 to 2023</b>	<b>No. of spills (WW)</b>	<b>Minutes of spills (WW)</b>	<b>No. of days affected (WW)</b>	<b>No. of days signs deployed advising against bathing (EA)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	8	672	6	0
1 <sup>st</sup> May 2023 to 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	5	77	2	5
<b>Total for year</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>

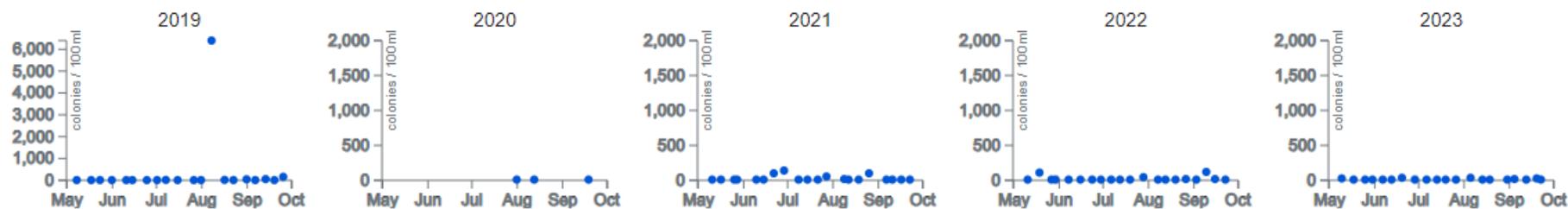
### Appendix 3 – Weekly sampling results taken by the Environment Agency

This is taken from the following web page [Bathing water profile \(data.gov.uk\)](https://data.gov.uk)

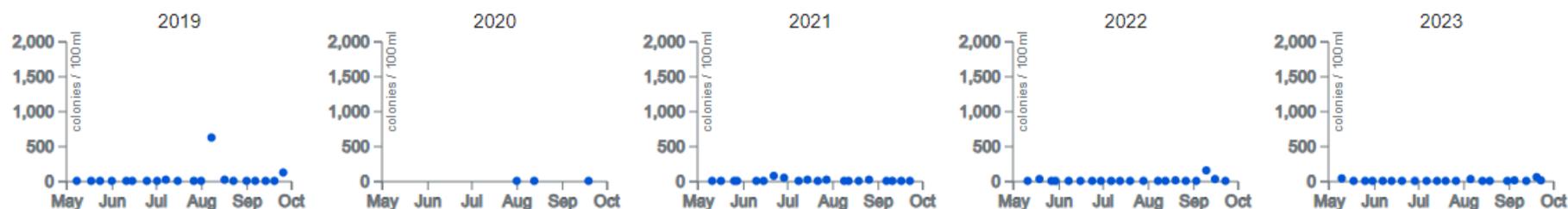
## Water quality sample results

See the [help page](#) for additional information on interpreting these charts.

### Intestinal Enterococci (IE)



### Escherichia coli (EC)



## Motion for the Ocean

The Motion for the Ocean initiative which is led by the ‘Ocean Conservation Trust’ is a model declaration to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring.

For the Town Council to adopt the Motion for the Ocean it must:

- a) Declare an urgent need for ocean recovery
- b) Ensure that the actions identified in the Motion are achieved

To date 25 councils have made the declaration including Blandford Town Council, Falmouth Town Council and Cornwall County Council. For more information about this initiative please see Appendix 1 below, which also includes a model declaration which most of these councils have used as a template.

Further information can also be found on the following website [Call a Motion for the Ocean - Ocean Conservation Trust](#)

## Recommendations

- 1) To identify a working party to develop an action plan to support ocean recovery and to report back to the next Environment Committee meeting.
- 2) To recommend that the Motion for the Ocean declaration is adopted by the Town Council at the next Environment Committee meeting.

Culvin Milmer  
Visitor Services and Business Development Manager

February 2024

## Appendix 1

### Motion for the Ocean (Coastal Council, England)

#### *The Local Government Ocean Recovery Declaration*

Dr Pamela Buchan<sup>1</sup>, Emily Cunningham<sup>2</sup> and Nicola Bridge<sup>3</sup>

*A model motion to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring*



#### *What is the Motion for the Ocean?*

Local authorities are working hard to bring about a brighter future for the communities we serve. We work to boost local economies, improve community health and wellbeing, and to protect and enhance local biodiversity. We know that the health, wellbeing and

prosperity of coastal, estuarine and maritime communities is dependent on a clean, healthy and productive marine environment – yet too often we consider these issues separately, rather than thinking about it in a joined-up way.

Developed by leading ocean experts, Dr Pamela Buchan, Emily Cunningham and Nicola Bridge, the #Motion4TheOcean has been created to enable local authorities to tackle these potentially competing ambitions of economic development, community health and wellbeing, and a healthy marine environment in a more holistic way. The motion aims to help councils and the communities we serve to “think ocean” and ensure the development of the blue economy delivers the recovery of our ocean and reducing socio-economic inequality in our coastal, estuarine and maritime communities.

The motion aims to help councils embed this new way of thinking at the highest levels of local decision-making, so it is not the responsibility of one team, but of the whole council. Councils of all tiers in England and Wales, along with the Local Government Association, have declared an urgent need for ocean recovery using a locally adapted Motion for the Ocean as can be seen on the dedicated webpage: [Motion for the Ocean](#) (see Appendix I). We look forward to seeing which council will be next.

### ***Why is it important for councils to pass a Motion for the Ocean?***

We recognise that our ocean and climate are in a state of emergency and that the communities we serve are on the frontline. An ocean in crisis is not only bad news for our climate, but also for our fishing, tourism, and marine industries, and for the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our coastal, estuarine and maritime communities. There are many opportunities for economic development in the marine environment, but these must be harnessed in a regenerative, rather than damaging, way.

**Delivering the pledges set out in the Motion for the Ocean would yield new jobs and opportunities, more resilient coastal economies, and happier, healthier people; as well as a cleaner, healthier and more productive natural environment. A healthy ocean is an essential ally in our fight against climate change and blue carbon could play an integral role in helping us meet our net zero targets.**

We have developed a Model Motion for the Ocean for inland councils which should be considered as a template to be adapted to local circumstances. We encourage local councils to adapt the pledges and wording, with the caveat that the ambition must not be reduced. **We are happy to support in this process.**

For any support, please contact: [Pamela](#) | [Emily](#) | [Nicola](#)

## **Model ‘Motion for the Ocean’ for Coastal Local Authorities**

### **This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.**

We recognise that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero carbon targets, and we need net zero carbon to recover our ocean.

This Council pledges to:

1. Report to Full Council within [12] months on the actions and projects that will begin an ocean recovery in [COUNCIL AREA].

2. Embed ocean recovery in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets, procurement and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, and considering ocean-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
3. Ensure that local planning supports ocean recovery, working closely with the Marine Management Organisation to embed strong links between the Local Plan and the [area] Marine Plan to support ocean recovery.
4. Ensure that our nature, biodiversity and climate strategies, such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, recognise how land and rivers connect to and impact the ocean and strive to support ocean recovery through a source-to-sea approach.
5. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver improved water quality and increased sustainability in marine industries, and to develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity; including the local fishing industry and the vital work of [local] IFCA.
6. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in [COUNCIL AREA], including:
  - a. Ensuring all pupils are given the opportunity to experience the ocean first-hand before leaving primary school - striving to include home-schooled children
  - b. Promoting sustainable and equitable access to the ocean through physical and digital experiences for all residents.
  - c. Through these actions, embed understanding of the "source-to-sea" approach and how all people, wherever they live, impact and are impacted by ocean health.
7. Use the Council website and other communication channels to update on ocean recovery progress, and signpost to ocean literacy development opportunities and marine citizenship pledges.
8. Write to the Government asking them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by:
  - a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
  - b) Working with coastal, estuarine and maritime communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
  - c) Appointing a dedicated Minister for the Coast.

- d) Embedding ocean and civic literacy into the national curriculum.
- e) Stopping plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle and support the solutions needed to address the threat posed by historic coastal landfill sites.
- f) Improving the water quality of our rivers, estuarine and coastal waters leading to the ocean to benefit nature and the health and wellbeing of all UK residents, including by stopping the regular pollution of our rivers and seas.
- g) And by listening to marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
  - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
  - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
  - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
  - iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of ocean recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing

## Swan Brook Report and proposed Partnership Project

### 1) Introduction

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 Sustainable Swanage held an Open Evening in which a number of short presentations were held on the subject of ‘The Swan Brook and Catchment – Celebrating our local waterways’ (see Appendix 1 for the event advert). Speakers included Wessex Water, the Environment Agency and Dorset National Landscapes (formally AONB) as well as an interesting overview of the history of the Brook by Nick Read.

It was noted that the Swan Brook catchment area encompasses much of the parish and many residents, while aware of its existence, know very little about it and the important impact it has on the area including the water quality for the sea.

Included in the highly informative evening was an offer from Ian Rees of Dorset National Landscapes to support the development of a ‘River Catchment Forum’ similar to what has been established by Char Valley Parish Council in West Dorset and known as the ‘Upper Char Valley Community Project’.

Since that time, the following groups, Sustainable Swanage, National Trust, Planet Purbeck and Litter Free Dorset have worked with Dorset National Landscapes to produce a report on the state of the Swan Brook. This is attached as Appendix 2.

### 2) The Swan Brook Report Summary

The Swan Brook is classified as a failing river under the Water Framework Directive. It is classed as being in poor condition in need of improvement. [Swan \(Swanage\) | Catchment Data Explorer | Catchment Data Explorer](#). There are many reasons for this failure, including the flood defences – which are obviously required. The combined issues are listed as:

- a) Degraded channel morphology, leading to unnatural conditions and faster flow. This in turn leads to diminished plant life and increased flood risk.
- b) Elevated levels of sediment and nutrients within the channel, smothering gravels and reducing oxygen levels. This in turn leads to diminished fish, plant, and insect life.
- c) Loss of wetland habitat, leading to increased flood risk and diminished wildlife.

To make a difference the following steps are required: partnership building; awareness raising; increasing knowledge and understanding; and enhancement.

### 3) Next steps

The ambition is to establish a partnership group to deliver on the actions identified within the report on page 23 including community engagement to increase awareness of the Swan Brook, and to support people to take actions to increase its health. This group would draw upon local, regional, and national experts.

A big part of any project would be the involvement of the local community, either through raising awareness of the issues facing the river, supporting them to take action at home, for

example installing water butts, and running citizen science and volunteering days for more direct participation.

Swanage Town Council are asked if they are able to support the development of this partnership project and to help deliver this partnership programme in the future, and particularly the community consultation and engagement elements of it. This can be in the form of officer support, or funding to allow community delivery. Ideally it would be both.

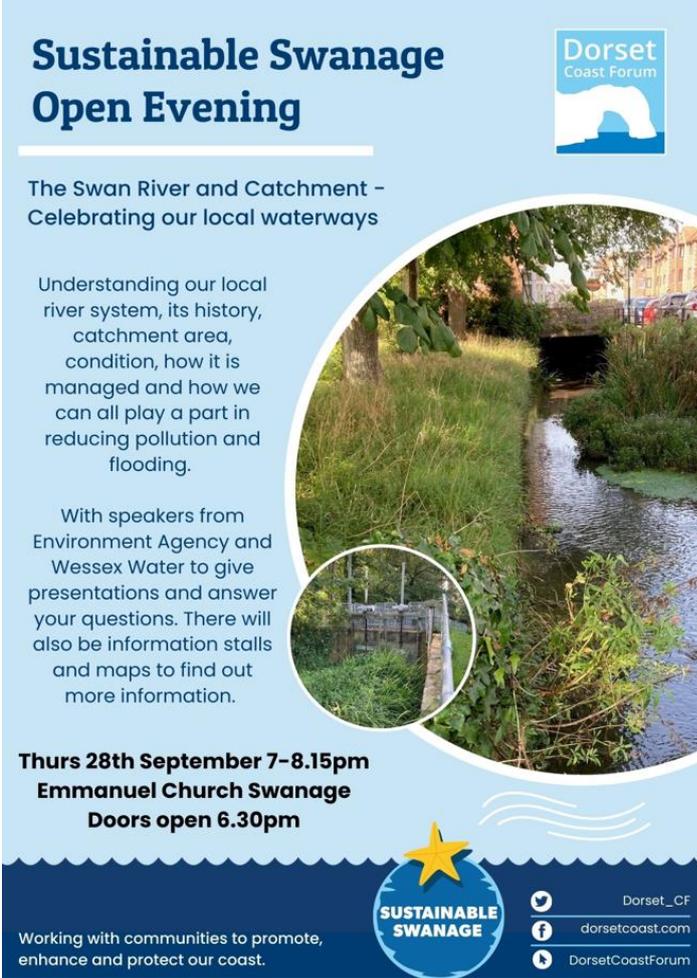
**4) Recommendations**

That Councillors consider providing formal support to the development of the Swan Brook Partnership Project.

Culvin Milmer  
Visitor Services and Business Development Manager

February 2024

- Appendix 1 – Sustainable Swanage Open Meeting: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023
- Appendix 2 – Swan Brook Report: Issues Appraisal and Action Plan v6



**Sustainable Swanage Open Evening**

**Dorset Coast Forum**

**The Swan River and Catchment - Celebrating our local waterways**

Understanding our local river system, its history, catchment area, condition, how it is managed and how we can all play a part in reducing pollution and flooding.

With speakers from Environment Agency and Wessex Water to give presentations and answer your questions. There will also be information stalls and maps to find out more information.

**Thurs 28th September 7-8.15pm**  
**Emmanuel Church Swanage**  
**Doors open 6.30pm**

**SUSTAINABLE SWANAGE**

Working with communities to promote, enhance and protect our coast.

**Dorset\_CF**  
**dorsetcoast.com**  
**DorsetCoastForum**

The poster features a large circular image of a river flowing through a lush green area with trees and buildings in the background. A smaller circular inset shows a close-up of a water filter or treatment structure. The background is light blue with white wavy lines at the bottom, suggesting water. The text is in various shades of blue and black, with key information in bold.

# Swan Brook:

## Issues Appraisal and Action Plan

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Logos			
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This report has been prepared in partnership with National Trust, Swanage Town Council (Sustainable Swanage), Planet Purbeck and Dorset National Landscape, with help from Environment Agency and Wessex Water.

Report version: 0.6 – DRAFT FOR CONSIDERATION BY STC

Date: 23/02/2024

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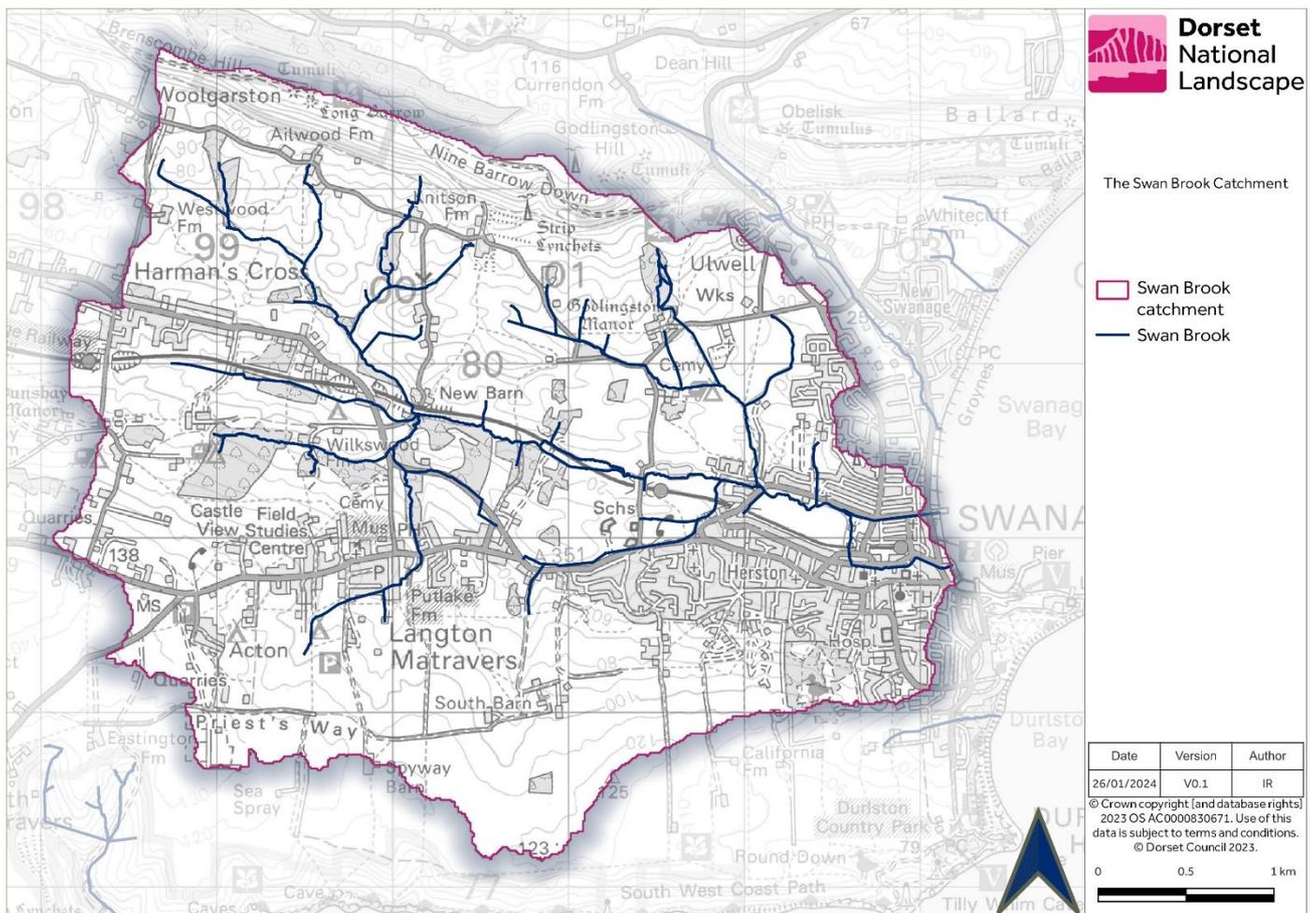
# Introduction

## Background

In September 2023, Sustainable Swanage in partnership with Swanage Town Council, hosted a community event focussed on the Swan Brook. As a result of this meeting, a small group consisting of Swanage Town Council, Litter Free Dorset, National Trust, and Planet Purbeck have convened to establish, what, if any, the next steps should be. To help, this report sets out the issues facing the Swan Brook and will facilitate wider engagement with the community to find out if these are issues worth addressing.

Once we have a better idea of the issues that are a priority for the local community, we can set out an approach to tackling them. This report will be supplemented with information on:

- Areas for further investigation, for example land management or flood management.
- Action, identifying opportunities for citizens & communities, environmental NGOs, and statutory agencies.
- An outline action plan



## Swan Brook Overview

The Swan Brook rises under the Purbeck Ridge at the junction between chalk and the underlying mudstones, which it flows over until discharging into the sea at Swanage. Part of the catchment is worked for the famed

Purbeck Stone. Otherwise, it is largely a rural catchment, except for Swanage at the mouth, which is a very popular tourist destination.

The entire catchment is in the Dorset National Landscape and the coastal strip, known as the Jurassic Coast, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

<b>River length</b>	6.02 km
<b>Catchment area</b>	21.08 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Geology</b>	Rises in chalk or limestone before running over mudstones to the sea.
<b>Land use</b>	Predominantly small livestock units and permanent grassland. Urban at mouth
<b>Principle towns and villages</b>	Langton Matravers, Swanage

No river in England is in pristine condition, and it is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to monitor how far from pristine the condition of our waterbodies has deviated. It is up to us to tackle the issues affecting the Swan Brook and make a difference on the ground (because if we don't work together and make a difference, who will?). By conserving and enhancing existing habitats of importance, restoring habitats where possible and working with natural process, it is possible to make meaningful improvements to the condition of the water environment, and ultimately the wellbeing of communities living within the catchment.

The next sections explore the state of the river and wider catchment, the areas that have been identified as at risk from the Environment Agency and from local people, and potential areas to explore that will help deliver our aim of improving the condition of the Swan Brook.

This document should be seen as a starting point for discussion and is not meant to be comprehensive. We can work with communities to explore opportunities to help improve the river and wider catchment.

## How to use this document

In the following sections, we go into more detail about the issues and impacts faced by the Swan Brook, as well as suggesting some responses that the community could deliver. We also explore the state of the wider environment because this can be both a source of the threats facing the water environment, such as sediment-laden runoff, or a solution to them, such as woodland planting that reduces flood risk. It is also important to consider the environment beyond the river corridor as activity far away from the waterbody can have an effect, if connected by ditches, roads, and other flow pathways.

The three main sections of the report are: Environment, Issues & Impacts, Action. The Environment section describes the geology and soils, as this dictates how water behaves in the catchment and what the land can be used for. It also describes the coverage of both intensive and extensive land use as well as how well the landscape functions for wildlife. It is important to understand this, as improving the functioning of the wider natural environment will benefit the water environment, as set out in the Box 1. The Issues & Impacts section explores, in more detail, the EA assessment of the waterbody and which issues are important to those who live and work in the area. The Action section highlights any known opportunities to improve the water environment and suggests some actions that can be delivered by communities and will make a difference.

### **Box 1: Working with Natural Processes**

Healthy catchments store and filter water in the landscape and slow the flow of water downstream. However, modern river landscapes are very different from what nature intended. We have lost water storage and filtration in wetlands, created hard surfaces that water can rush off, and changed our river channels so they move water very quickly. Our rivers are less able to cope with the rain we have now and expect in the future, increasing the likelihood of flooding and pollution in winter and reduced flow rates and drought impacts in summer. Simplified river systems with straightened homogenous channels are ecologically far less complex than a natural catchment, and as a result have far reduced value for biodiversity.

Restoring natural processes to catchments and river system means restoring some of the natural diversity and dynamics to channels, creating a more varied morphology with a wider range of ecological niches and habitats in which wildlife can thrive. By naturalising river systems and slowing the rates at which water moves downstream, we can better protect ourselves from hazards such as flooding and pollution. A wide range of techniques can be used to naturalise streams including tree planting, riverbank restoration, building small-scale woody dams, reconnecting rivers with their floodplains and storing water temporarily on open land.

An additional benefit of restoring natural processes is that it will also help wildlife thrive. It is because of this that we use as a focus, Natural England's objective of having 30% of an area as functioning habitat. If we achieve this by restoring natural processes in the right place, we will not only have thriving plants and animals, but the water environment will also be better protected.

# 1 : Environment

## Geology

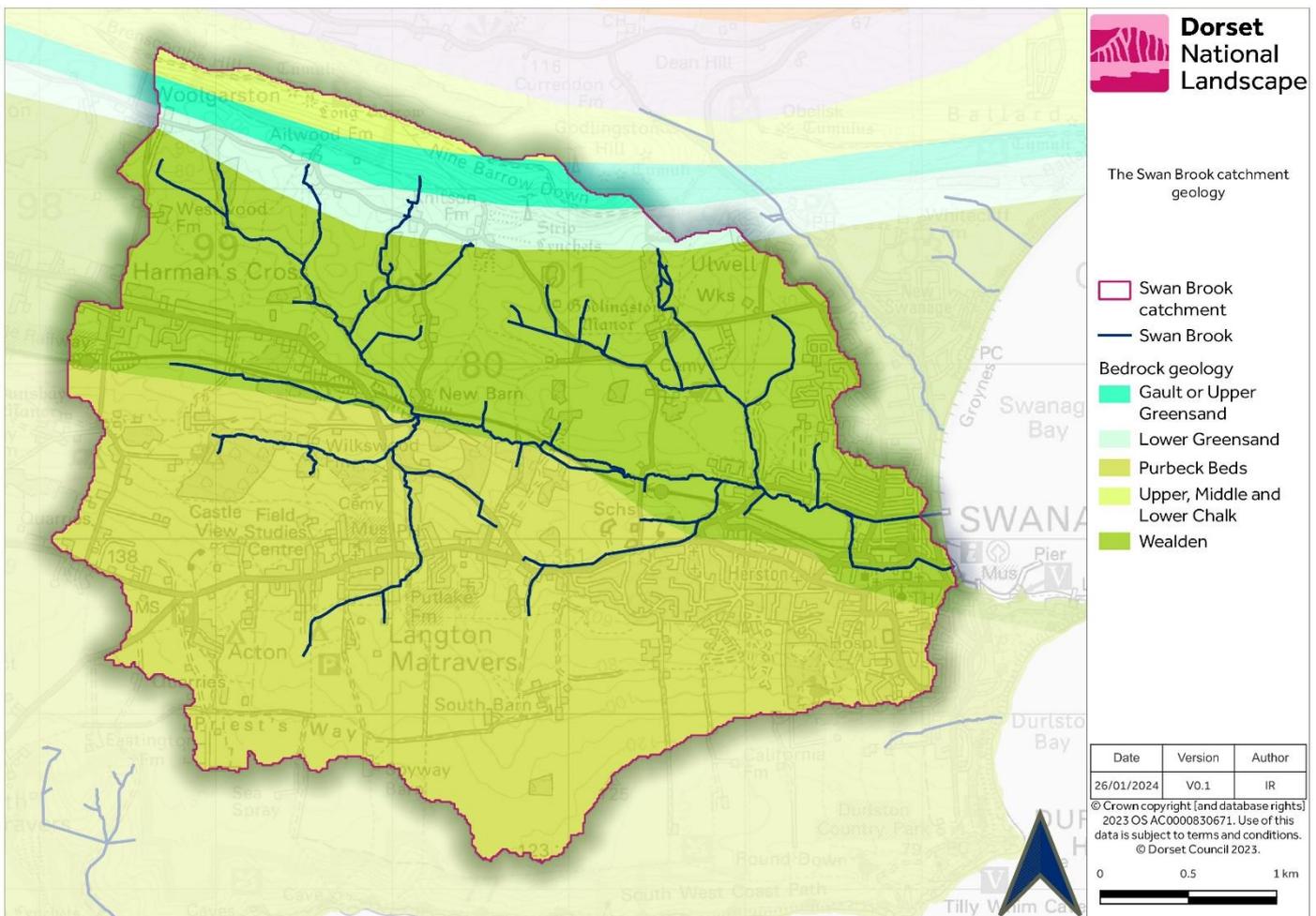
The geology under our feet heavily influences how water moves through the catchment, the soils that form above it and the plants and animals that live here. It also influences how we use the land to produce food.

The catchment is broadly split in two, with the permeable rocks of the White Chalk subgroup, Gault Formation and Greensand Formation, along with the Purbeck Limestone Group, resulting in little surface water to the north and south of the catchment, as water is absorbed into the rock. The remaining Wealdon Group of rocks, located in the centre of the catchment, impede drainage, resulting in more surface water.

The Lower Greensand Group of sandstones and mudstones were formed approximately 100 to 125 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Following this, the Gault Formation and Upper Greensand Formation, again made up of mudstones, sandstones, and limestone, were formed in shallow seas between 94 and 112 million years ago. Later in the Cretaceous Period, the White Chalk subgroup was formed in shallow tropical seas approximately 66 to 100 million years ago. Still in the Cretaceous Period, but now in a terrestrial situation, the Wealdon Group of mudstones, siltstones and sandstones were formed approximately 125 to 156 million years ago in marginal coastal plains with lakes and swamps periodically inundated by the sea. The Purbeck Limestone Group were deposited in marginal coastal plains between 140 and 151 million years ago in the Cretaceous and Jurassic Periods.

The Gault / Greensand has the potential to naturally elevate the levels of phosphate found in the watercourse.

The map below shows the extent of the geology within the catchment.



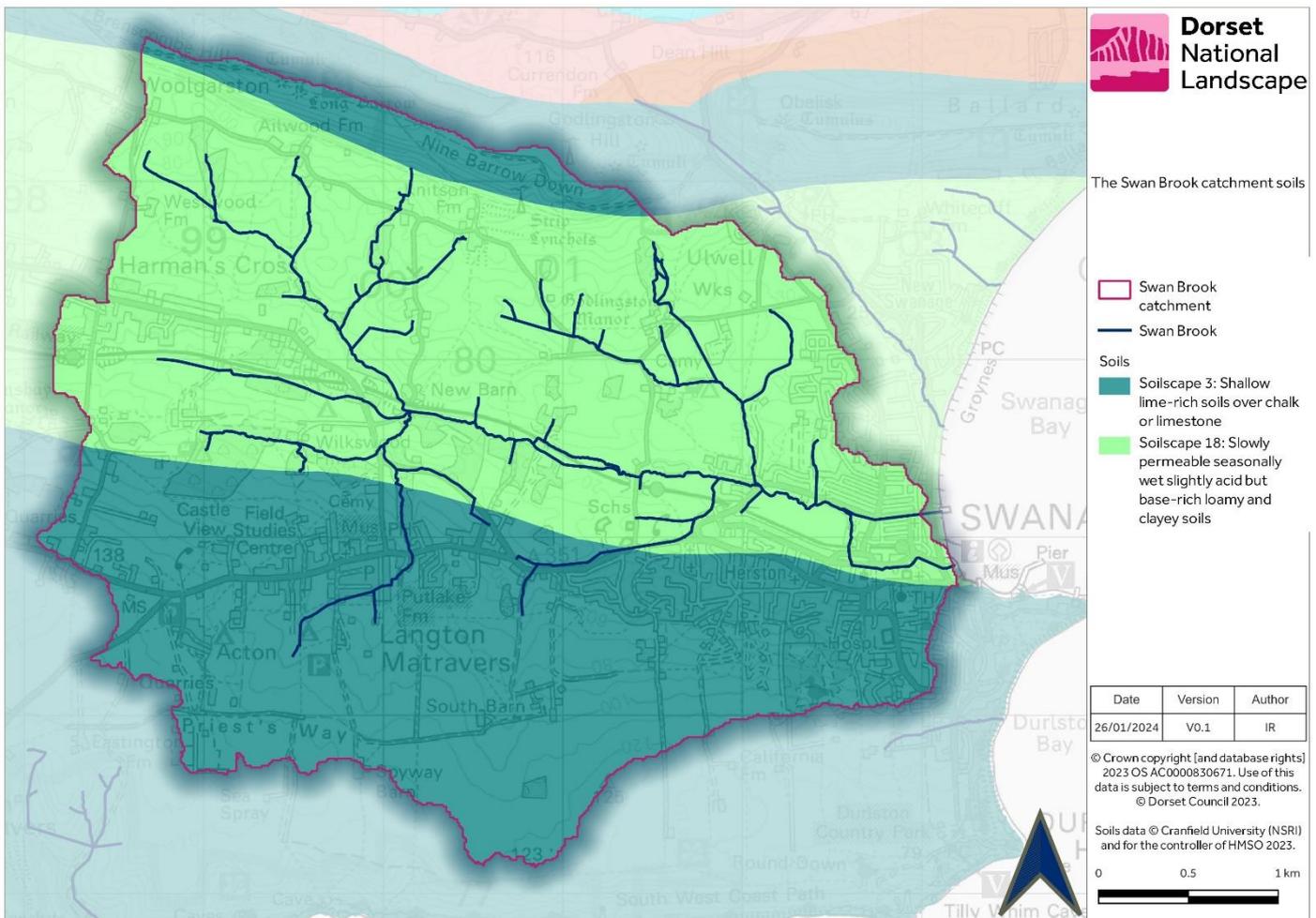
## Soil types

Heavily influenced by the underlying geology, soils are at the interface between biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) worlds. These are important stores of carbon and biodiversity in their own right and provide the foundations from which others can grow. Soils can be broadly described as basic (acid), calcareous (alkaline) and neutral. The soils of the Swan Brook catchment are split between freely draining lime rich soils and the impeded drainage of the valley bottom loamy and clayey soils.

The dominant soil types, as characterised by Cranfield University's Soilscape, are:

- 'Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone.' They are freely draining and have moderate fertility. They are suitable for herb-rich downland and limestone pastures, beech hangars and other lime-rich woodlands. There is low/medium potential for carbon storage. Water drains to groundwater and is particularly vulnerable to leaching of nitrate and pesticides to groundwater and surface capping.
- 'Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils.' They impede drainage and have moderate fertility. They are suitable for seasonally wet pasture and woodland habitat and can be used for grassland and arable, with some woodland. There is low potential for carbon storage. Water drains to a stream network (rather than groundwater) and the main risks are associated with overland flow from compacted or poached fields. Organic slurry, dirty water, fertiliser, pathogens, and fine sediment can all move in suspension or solution with overland flow or drain water.

The map below shows the extent of the Soilscape in the catchment.



## Land use

The geology and soils of the Swan catchment have strongly influenced how this land has been used. Where it is fertile and accessible to farm machinery, it may be used for intensive grass for dairy or beef. Where the soil is less fertile or the land too steep or waterlogged, then it may be more extensively used, leaving fragments of semi-natural habitats. This fragmentation of semi-natural habitat has increased greatly since the Second World War because of improved capability of farm machinery and techniques that make farming marginal land economically viable, alongside government incentives. This was driven by an increasing population and subsequent higher demand for food. As a result, over 97% of all semi-natural habitats mapped in Dorset in the 1930s have been converted to agriculturally improved arable or grassland.

Looking in a bit more detail at the land use of the Swan catchment, we can split it down into a number of categories that are described below. The figures are derived from a study undertaken in 2018 that mapped land use in the Dorset National Landscape from existing data, aerial photography, and satellite images.

### Intensive land use

Improved grassland covers just over half of the catchment area. Improved grassland will predominantly be used to support beef and dairy cattle. The grassland will be planted 'leys' dominated with grass species, such as ryegrass, possibly with clovers. that are periodically ploughed up and replanted. To maintain their condition, they will be treated with nitrates and phosphates several times during the growing season. There is a minimal area of arable in the catchment, which reduces the risk of sediment contamination to the watercourse.

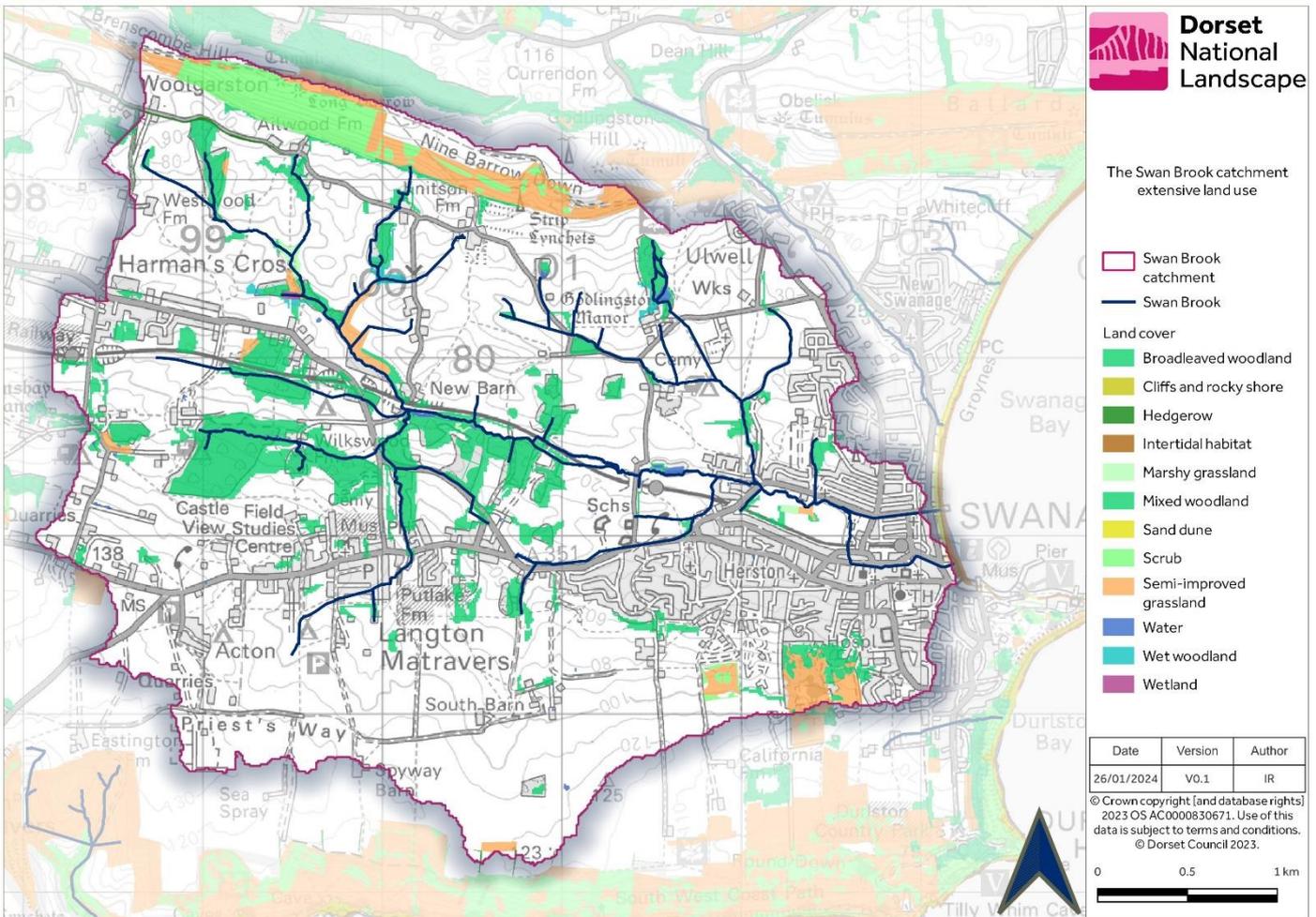
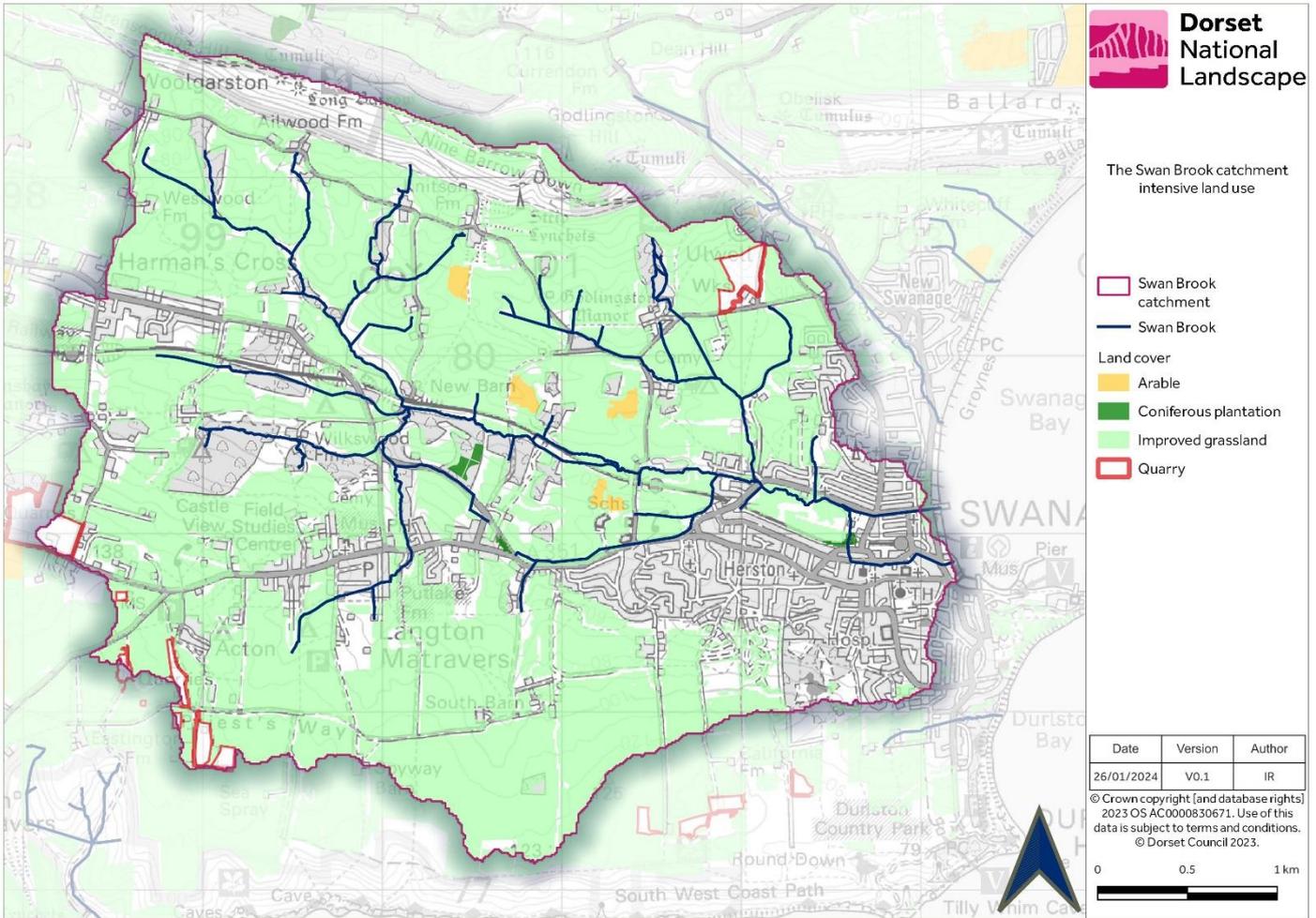
In total, intensive land use covers close to 56% of the catchment area and has the potential to have impacts on the water environment of the Swan Brook.

### Extensive land use

Covering 11% of the catchment areas is broadleaved woodland, including wet woodland and 2% scrub. This is below the average for Dorset. Semi-improved grassland is not as rich in wildlife as semi-natural grasslands because it has been improved in the past to favour a grass-dominated sward. However, having not been ploughed up recently and as intensively managed, it holds great potential for restoration back to semi-natural habitat. There is 3% semi-improved grassland within the catchment.

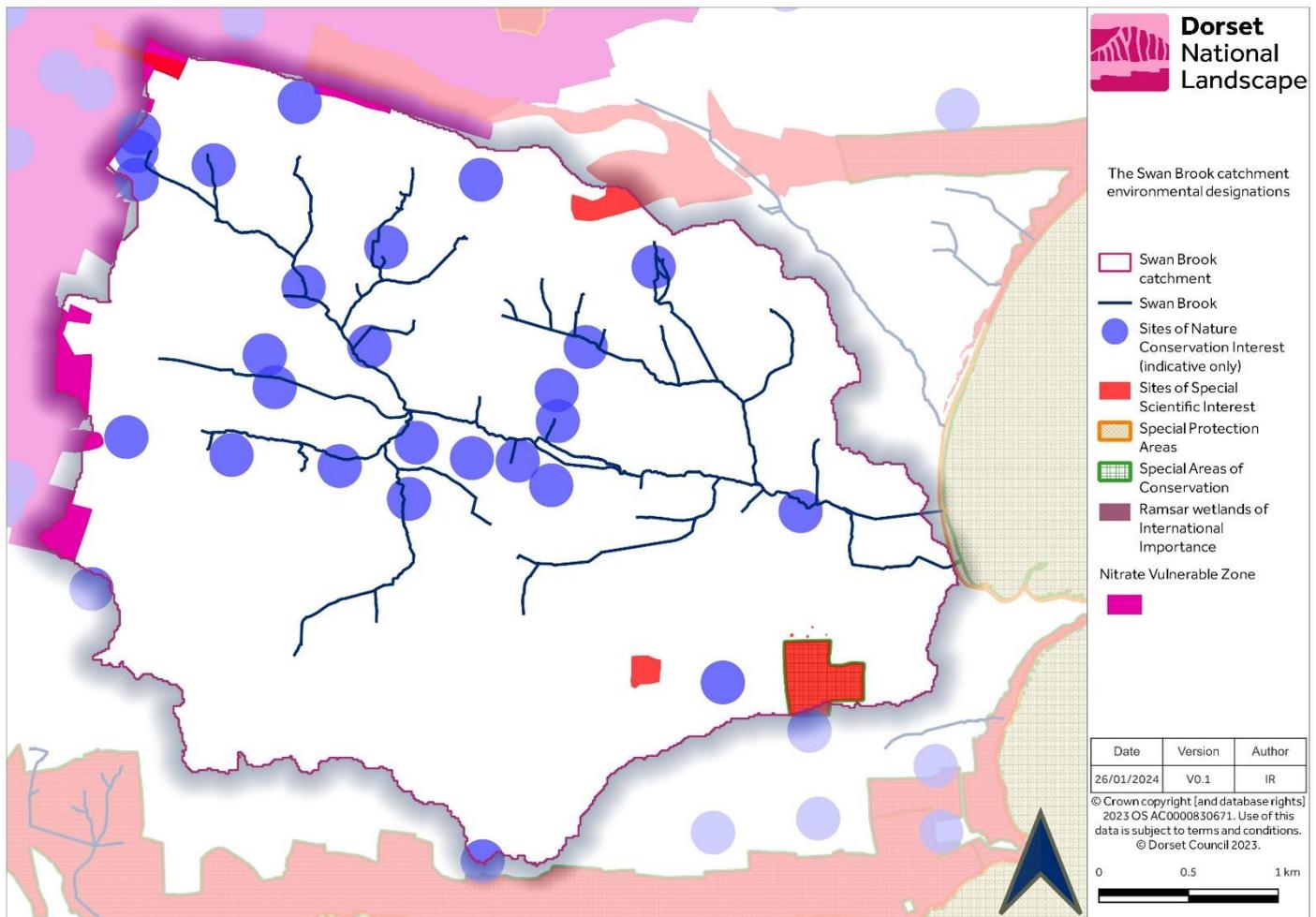
### Other land use

Urban land cover takes up 25% of the area, which is a large percentage compared to others, and there is an additional 3% that has been classified as gardens (though this category is hard to define because the individual areas are quite small). Quarries make up approximately 1% of the area.



There are parts of three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the catchment, covering approximately 20ha. These are Belle View Quarry, Purbeck Ridge (East), and Townsend SSSIs. Townsend SSSI is part of the wider St Albans Head to Durlston Head Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There are 23 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest covering approximately 143ha.

The importance of the catchment is not necessarily reflected in the number of designations, but nevertheless, it will act as a stepping stone from the surrounding areas of importance. In the immediate vicinity of the catchment are a number of other important environmental designations. These are South Dorset Coast SSSI, Corfe Common SSSI, Brenscombe Heath SSSI, Studland and Godlingston Heath SSSI, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site, Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC, Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, Solent and Dorset Coast SPA, Studland to Portland SAC, Purbeck Coast Marine Conservation Zone. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone fringes the catchment to the north and the west.



## 2 : Issues & Impacts

### Water Framework Directive assessment

The Environment Agency classify waterbodies such as Swan Brook into categories that reflect their overall condition. These are **High** > **Good** > **Moderate** > **Poor** > **Bad**. The Swan Brook is categorised as **Poor**. The aim is to have waterbodies classed as Good, so the brook is currently considered to be a failing watercourse. It was also classified as Poor in 2015, 2016, and 2019, and Moderate in 2014.

This overall classification is based on a number of components and an evaluation of each of these.

The areas that the Environment Agency monitor to produce their classification are summarised below. There is more detail behind these categories, which is available from the Catchment Data Explorer website<sup>1</sup>.

Classification area		Condition assessment category
<b>Overall</b>		<b>Poor</b>
<b>Ecological</b>	Biological	<b>Poor</b>
	Hydromorphological	<b>Supports Good</b>
	Physico-chemical	<b>Good</b>
	Specific pollutants	<b>No data</b>
<b>Chemical</b>	Priority substances	<b>Good</b>
	Other pollutants	<b>Does not require assessment</b>
	Priority hazardous substances	<b>Bad</b>

#### Threats:

The specific elements that are currently failing are:

Condition assessment category name	Primary cause of low rating	Root causes
<b>Biological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macrophytes and Phytobenthos (essentially plants and algae)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor river morphology as a result of flood protection structures.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority hazardous substances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE)</li> <li>Mercury and its compounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More information is needed to understand the sources of PBDE and Mercury.</li> </ul>

#### Impacts:

The impacts on the biology of the river are reduced diversity and abundance of plants and algae, compared to what you would expect in a natural stream of similar characteristics. Little is currently known about the impacts of the hazardous substances on wildlife, and this an area of further work for the Environment Agency.

<sup>1</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB108044009920>

## Local assessment

To get a local perspective, we consulted other stakeholders about their views on the threats facing the Swan Brook, including Dorset Council, Wessex Water, and the Environment Agency, amongst others. We did this in 2015 and updated it in 2021. The main issues are flooding, bathing water quality, and rural runoff (including nutrient enrichment).

In addition, the identified causes of poor morphology resulting from flood defences, local assessment identified historical straightening of the channel, and intensive agricultural use within the floodplain as further causes of decline.

The combined areas of most concern, as identified by the Environment Agency and local stakeholders are:

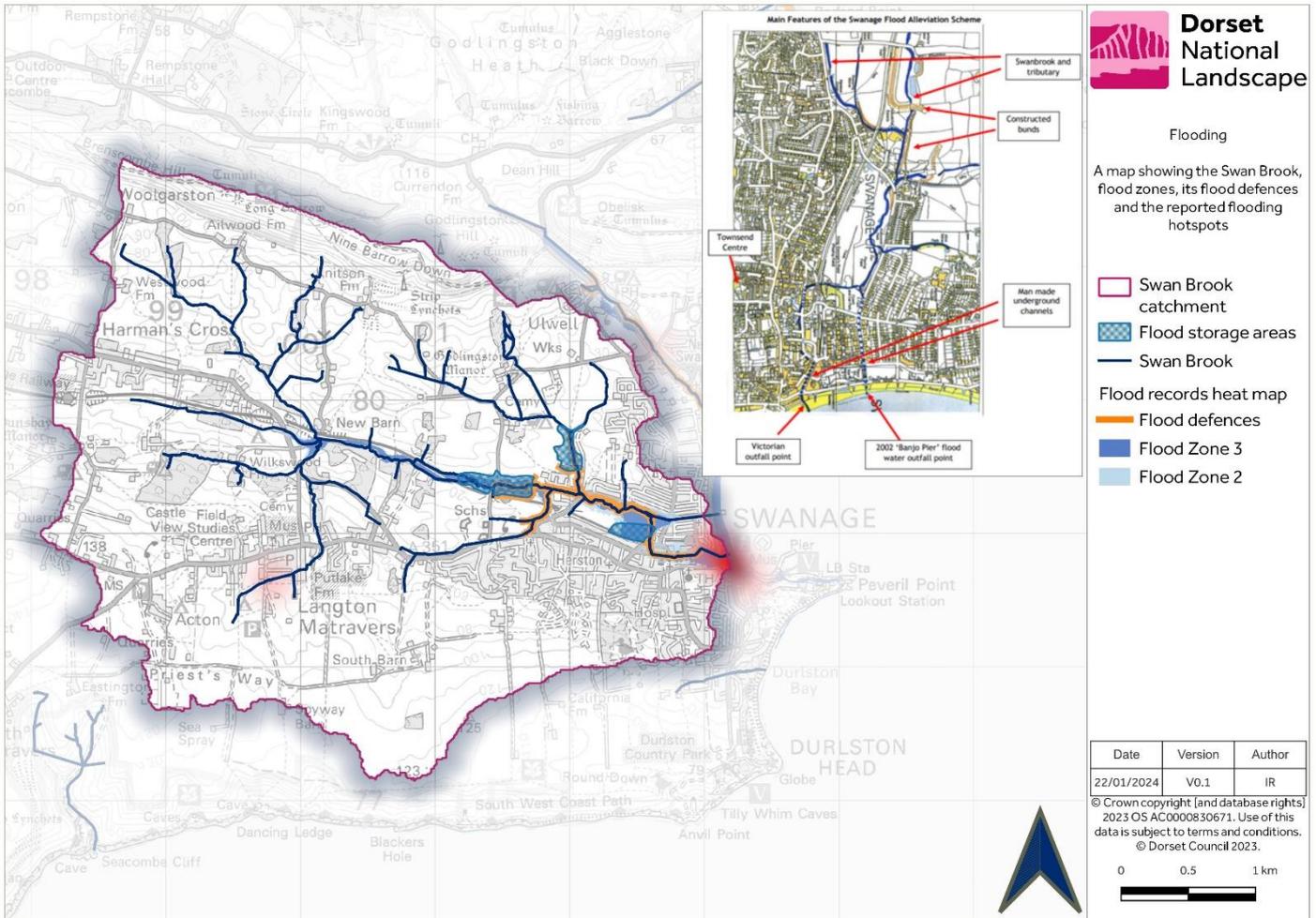
Issue	Cause	Impact
Degraded channel morphology, leading to unnatural conditions	Flood defence construction	Diminished plant life
Degraded channel morphology, leading to faster flow	Historical straightening and deepening in the headwaters, through dredging and removal of natural woody debris	Increased flood risk downstream
Elevated levels of sediment and nutrients within the channel, smothering gravels and reducing oxygen levels	Intensive agricultural activity in the floodplain	Diminished fish, plant, and insect life
Loss of wetland habitat	Land drainage for agricultural improvement	Increased flood risk downstream, diminished wildlife
Elevated levels of mercury and polybrominated diphenyl ethers	Historical industrial use, particularly coal-fired power stations and flame retardants	Unknown on the Swan Brook

## What we know

### *Flooding:*

The Swan Brook is a small catchment, with headwaters converging before passing into Swanage town, where the mouth of the channel is located. Within Swanage, "Flood Zone 3" areas are highlighted, showing that land has a high probability of flooding from rivers and the sea<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/flood-zone-results?polygon=%5b%5b398393,80455%5d,%5b398393,80982%5d,%5b398628,82124%5d,%5b401953,81194%5d,%5b404170,81150%5d,%5b403946,76672%5d,%5b398337,76526%5d,%5b398393,80455%5d%5d&center=%5b401253,79325%5d&location=Swanage>



The town of Swanage has flooded in the past, with the highest river level ever recorded in January 2013, and a significant flood event registered in 1990. Substantial alleviation infrastructure has since been implemented (from 1993-1997), with the majority centred around the lower reaches of the river, on the approach and stretch which passes through Swanage.

The construction of the scheme included<sup>3</sup>:

- Two reservoir bunds on the outskirts of town and a shallow bund at King George’s field.
- Widened and straightened channel adjacent to the original channel of the Swan Brook.
- Additional channel underneath Victoria Avenue to the additional discharge point at Banjo Pier.
- Telemetry sensors to measure water depths along the channel, which are linked and monitored by the Environment Agency.
- Automatic and manually controlled sluice gates at strategic points to stop and direct the water flow away from the businesses in the town centre.

Concerns remain that this scheme will not suffice if heavy rain coincides with a spring tide. A recent heavy rain event (January 2024) caused significant damage to Shore Road, as floodwaters breached the drain covers.

Dorset County Council’s Local Flood Risk Management Strategy<sup>4</sup> lists the following objectives:

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rgs.org/schools/resources-for-schools/jurassic-coast-of-dorset-and-east-devon/swanage-flood-alleviation>

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/280970/Local+Flood+Risk+Management+Strategy+for+Dorset+%28Technical+Report%29.pdf/72585472-02bc-18f1-cd78-f40752127225>

1. Understand flood risk across Dorset.
2. Manage the likelihood and impacts of flooding.
3. Help Dorset's communities manage their own flood risk.
4. Ensure flood risk is considered in local and development proposals.
5. Improving flood prediction, warning, response, and flood recovery

EA flood risk management plans<sup>5</sup> include the development of flood warning systems, improving flood resilience and Natural Flood Management schemes as well as wastewater management and beavers.

### ***Channel and floodplain morphology:***

*\*Detailed hydrological assessments proposed as part of an NFM funding application and a summary will be added later\**

The Swan Brook is characterised by a straightened channel with simplified morphology. Along with land drains throughout much of the agricultural catchment this accelerates the rate at which water flows off the land, thereby increasing flood risk; the resultant lack of habitat diversity both in-channel and within the riparian zone and floodplain mean the modified channel morphology is also a principal cause of its current ecologically impoverished condition.

We know that the constructed flood defences are necessary to protect the residents of Swanage. They have, however, created an unnatural system that has the potential to have ecological impacts. Further work is required to look at what these impacts are, if any, and how we can compensate for them. Further work is also required upstream to better understand the naturalness of the system, and opportunities for improvement. Increasing our understanding of geomorphological processes within the Swan Brook is a key action.

### ***Rural runoff issues:***

The relatively intensive agricultural management of over half the catchment (reduced vegetation roughness, soil compaction and land drains within upper sections of catchments) has reduced the capacity for the upper catchment to absorb and retain water in the soil. In periods of heavy rain surface run-off is frequent, and this is locally exacerbated where it coincides with the impacts of impermeable surfaces of roads and urban development.

Alongside flood damage, soil erosion and loss can be significant, particularly within arable systems. Where connected to the brook, this will result in elevated levels of sediment and nutrients (which adhere to the sediment) within the water column and lying on the riverbed. The impact is smothering of gravels for spawning fish and insects, as well as some rooting plants. Nutrient enrichment ultimately leads to reduced oxygen levels, so the whole system is less able to support wildlife in the numbers you would expect.

### ***Priority hazardous substances***

National modelling of hazardous substances has put all rivers in England at risk of contamination of mercury and polybrominated diphenyl ethers. We do not know the specific impacts on the Swan Brook, and the only remedy is time as they are both almost impossible to remove from the system once there. The historical causes are coal-fired power stations, with the mercury distributed on the wind, and flame retardants that contained polybrominated diphenyl ethers in fire-fighting foam, electronic equipment, and textiles, amongst others.

<sup>5</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/flood-planning/explorer/cycle-2/place?name=Swanage%20Bay&easting=403998&northing=79866&local-type=Bay>

## Areas for investigation

Addressing the human and ecological impacts of poor channel morphology and rural runoff issues requires further investigation to ensure we deliver solutions that are best for people and nature, and that work with natural processes. The following sections explore potential opportunities in a little more detail.

### *Land Management*

Land plays a key role in regulating water quality as water moves through the landscape. By mapping a series of indicators that determine water quality risk, we have identified areas for potential action that could improve water quality.

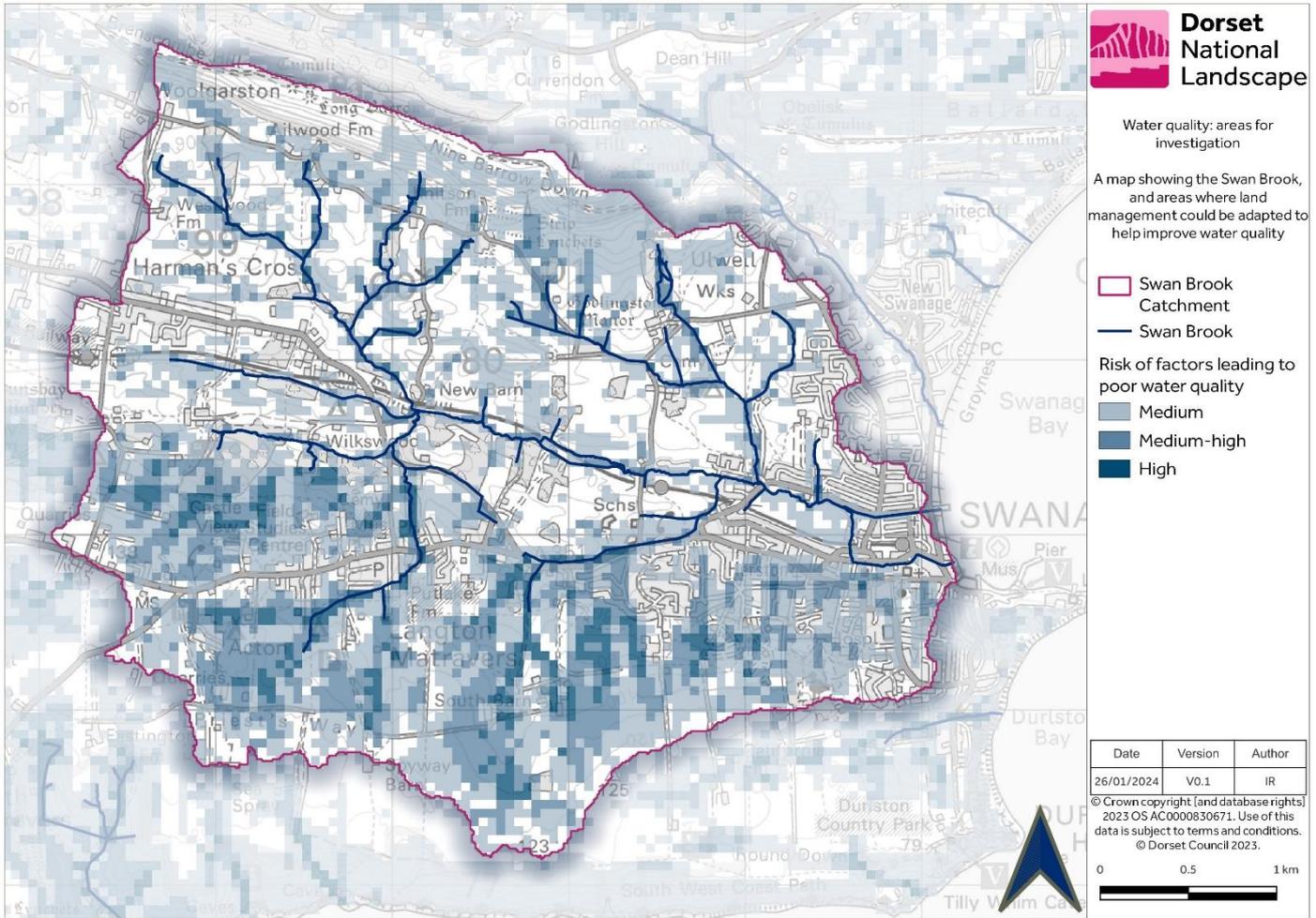
The indicators we have mapped are:

- **Land use risk:** some land uses pose a high inherent risk of diffuse pollution. For example, arable land typically poses more risk to water quality than more natural habitats.
- **Slope:** Slope is a risk factor that poses a threat to water quality, with steeper slopes representing a higher risk.
- **Soil type:** Some soils are particularly prone to erosion, while others represent a risk due to rapid leaching of pollutants in solution.
- **Hydrological connectivity:** In some locations water is more likely to run over the land surface and pick up sediment, due to the shape of the land. These pathways have potential for contaminated water to enter the river.
- **Proximity to watercourse:** Areas in the 'riparian corridor' (near the riverbank) are more likely to be connected to the watercourse, and therefore pose a higher risk.

The following map shows where these areas of risk occur and coincide with darker shades showing areas of land where there is a greater risk of water quality being degraded in the catchment. These represent priority areas for investigation and action.

In terms of action, nothing can be done about slope, hydrological connectivity, soil type or proximity to watercourse. However, there are opportunities through changing land use. This can vary from establishment of grass buffers that intercept pollution-laden overland flow in high-risk areas through to land use change away from risky cropping regimes. The most significant benefits could be a change in grassland production away from a rye grass dominated sward to one that included more deep-rooting herbal species. The details of what is suitable from both a water quality and farm business perspective would be assessed on a site-by-site basis.

When planning land use change, it is also important to consider where multiple benefits could be delivered, and further mapping can inform action that would also benefit carbon sequestration, enhanced biodiversity, and improved access.



## Sewage

There are a small number of consented discharges within the catchment; 16 in total as shown in the following map. Of these, 13 are linked to domestic properties, one to a business and two to Wessex Water. 11 discharge to soakaways and five to the Swan Brook or its tributaries directly.

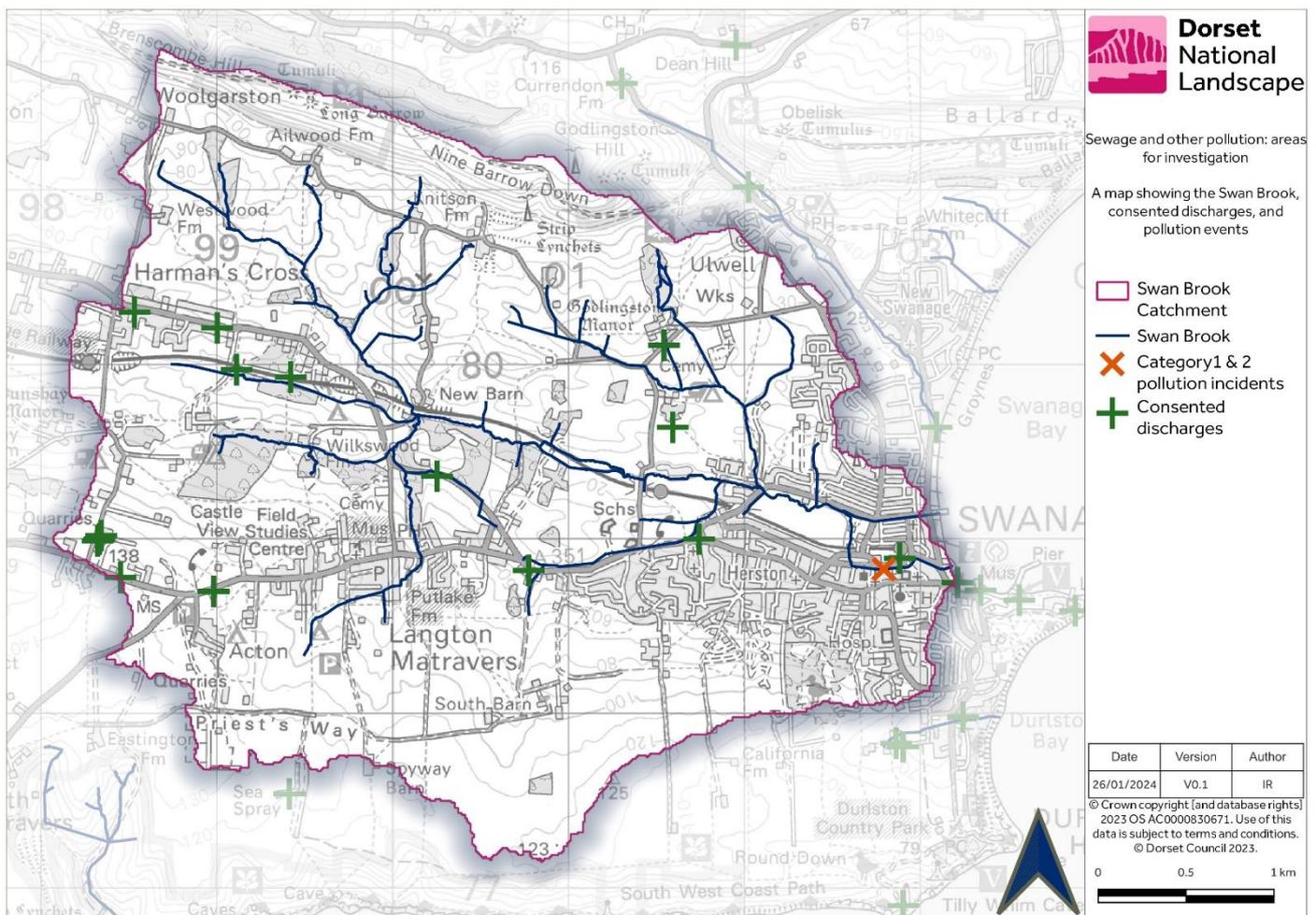
The two Wessex Water assets are Herston Cross attenuation tank CSO and Harman's Cross Pumping Station.

Herston Cross attenuation tank CSO spilled two times in 2020, three times in 2021, and two times in 2022.

There are other overflows nearby, but these discharge directly to the sea.

Focussing on domestic discharges, the problem for the functioning of the river is not the number of consented discharges, but that some of them may not be operating correctly. Regular maintenance is required to ensure that the effluent leaving the system is as clean as it can be. Raising awareness of the issue and best-practice management are the best course of action here.

In addition to the consented discharges, there has been one significant (Category 1 & 2) pollution incidents between 2001 and 2021. This is also shown on the following map. There have been 29 Category 3 incidents (a lower pollution risk), the majority of which are classed as 'other', so not associated with agriculture or the water industry, and 28 Category 4 incidents (which have no environmental impact).



### Flow

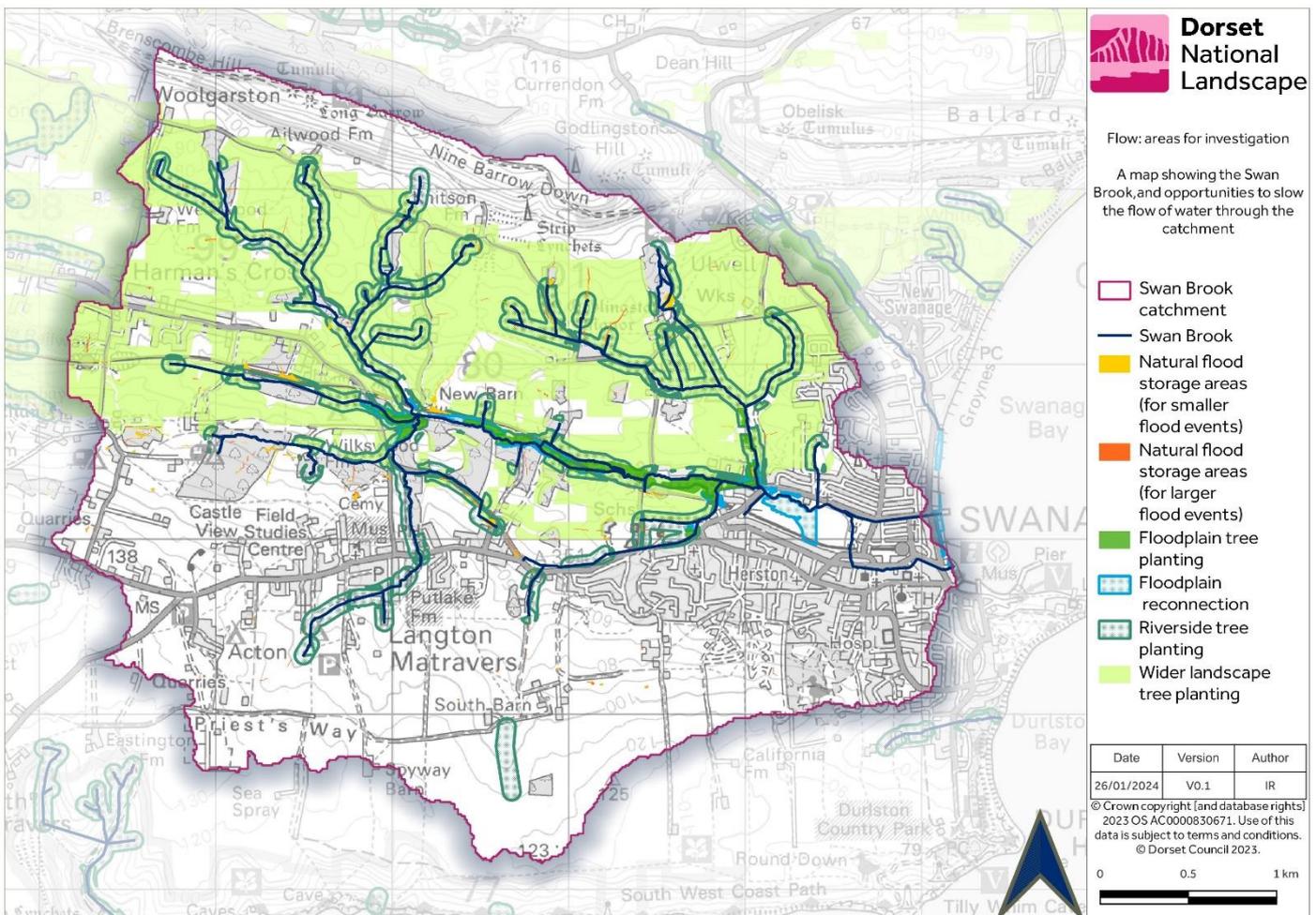
Though rivers and streams provide many benefits, they can also cause harm, particularly through flooding. This can be from the river itself, groundwater, and from overland flow. There have been significant flooding events in the catchment, affecting people living in Swanage particularly. These were in 1990 and 2013, with flood defence infrastructure constructed following the 1990 flooding.

Slowing the flow of water through the catchment by, for example, holding it back in wetlands or improving infiltration into the soil through removal of land drains, and woodland planting, can reduce the incidence of flooding, as well as support the functioning of the existing 'hard engineered' flood defences. The Environment Agency have undertaken mapping of where the best opportunities are for working with natural processes to reduce flooding. The solutions include planting of trees in the riparian corridor (next to the river), in the floodplain or in the wider landscape. They also include reconnecting the river to its floodplain, where appropriate, so that they function naturally, holding flood water and releasing it more slowly downstream, and therefore avoiding the damaging flood peaks. Another solution to this is creating natural flood water storage areas in priority areas. This is less extensive than floodplain reconnection, but still valuable.

The National Trust have also been exploring wetland creation in the headwaters, with the aim of reducing flood risk downstream, alongside improving nature.

The map on the next page shows where opportunities have been identified in the Swan Brook catchment.

Like the biodiversity opportunity mapping, these maps are only a guide and a prompt for discussions with landowners and farmers.



## **Habitat**

Rivers and streams are vital for healthy and functioning landscapes because they act as corridors for species to move along, connecting important isolated fragments of habitat together and allowing wildlife to thrive. By better managing existing habitats and restoring lost habitats, we can make a positive contribution to the health of the Swan Brook and the wider landscape.

Mapping undertaken by the Dorset National Landscapes has identified important core habitats for semi-natural grassland, broadleaved woodland, wetland, and lowland heathland. There are 51ha of important grassland at 31 sites within the catchment, and 567ha of important woodlands at 137 sites. There are no heathland sites, as the right geological conditions do not exist. There is only one wetland site within the catchment, which is an indication of historical loss of this habitat type. It should be a priority for restoration. Dorset National Landscape also mapped how these sites are connected to each other through sympathetic land management. This is called the nature network.

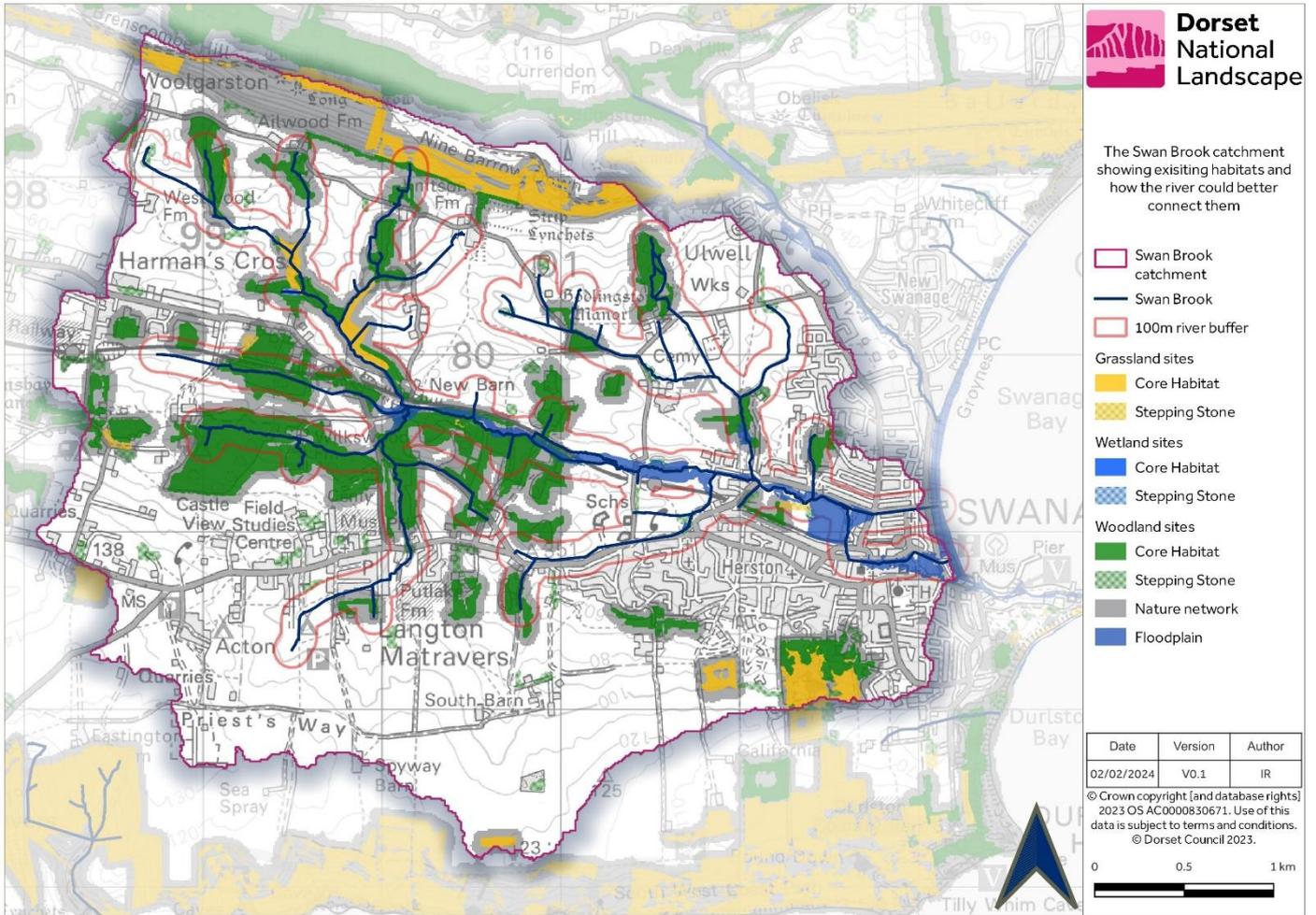
The map below shows a 100m buffer around the river, and how this is connected to the core sites within the catchment, and their nature network. Opportunities to restore habitat in this buffer will support species movement along the Swan Brook and should be a priority for action.

It is important to note that these maps only make suggestions, and details need to be explored further on a site-by-site basis. They also do not consider the quality of existing habitat, so surveys are required to make sure that woodland planting, for example, is not being proposed on high quality grasslands. The intended use of the maps is to help inform conversations with interested landowners and not as a vision for what the area should look like.

In terms of action, we can use these maps to help us plan where to start conversations with farmers and foresters. Priority habitats for restoration and enhancement would be wet woodland and wet grassland, as this will have maximum impact for the river environments as well as for climate sequestration (capturing and locking away excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere) and reducing downstream flooding. We can support farmers to access grants to make changes, where they fit with their farming system. Examples of funding that is available are Countryside Stewardship or the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant or Nature for Climate Fund.

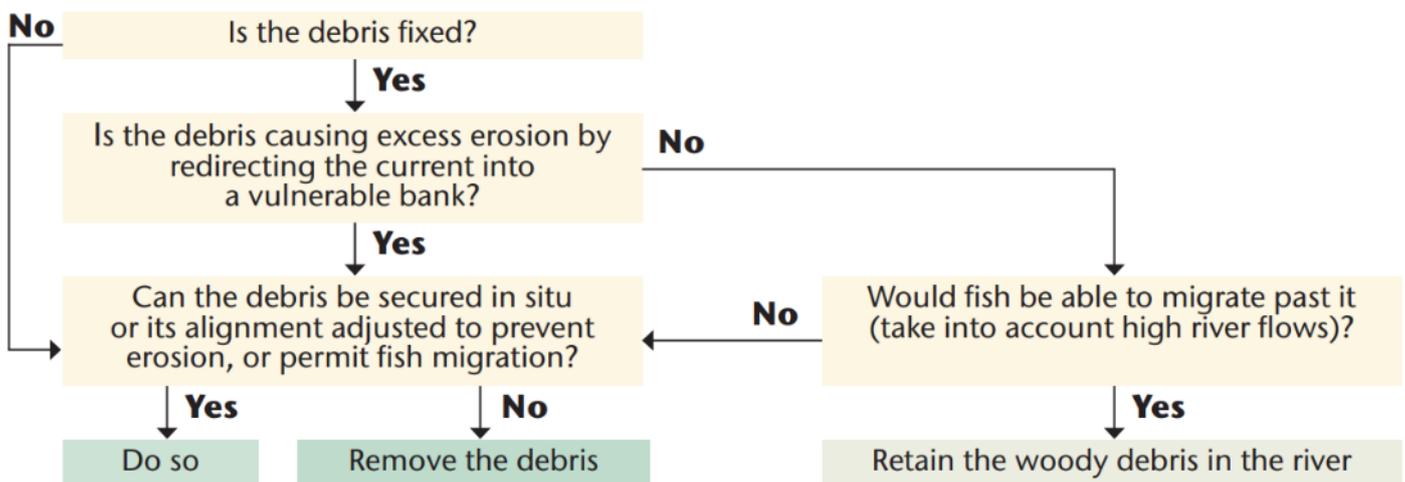
As well as restoring habitats, we also need to ensure good management of the existing habitats and where possible, sympathetic management within the buffer areas. This could be habitat restoration, but could also be, amongst other things, managing grassland with fewer inputs, introducing herbal leys, or letting hedgerows grow out.

By delivering for biodiversity, we would also be helping to meet the UK government's ambition of managing 30% of land for wildlife by 2030.



## Morphology

There are many ways of tackling poor morphology. One of the simplest is leaving large woody debris within the channel, as this is a key driver of natural function. However, in a landscape where the river is constrained by historic and current use, this may not always be an appropriate aim. The Wild Trout Trust have developed a simple decision matrix to help inform decisions about large woody debris retention. This is set out below (© Wild Trout Trust) and more information can be found on their website<sup>6</sup>. Other ways of tackling poor morphology include restoring the channel to its original dimensions and course, and by creating greater connections with the floodplain, so that wetlands are introduced back into the landscape. Furthermore, breaking up of land drains within fields can create the wetland habitats missing from the floodplain. Increasing the wetness of the floodplain can result in improved water quality entering the brook, which is good for wildlife, slowing the flow of water down stream, which is good for reducing flood risk, and providing habitat for rare and threatened wetland species.



<sup>6</sup> [https://www.wildtrout.org/assets/files/library/Woody\\_Debris\\_Apr2012\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.wildtrout.org/assets/files/library/Woody_Debris_Apr2012_WEB.pdf)

## 3 : Actions

### Current action

Through our engagement with organisations and individuals over the winter of 2020, several potential opportunities were highlighted for the Swan Brook catchment:

1. Wessex Water have developed Drainage and Waste Water Management Plans<sup>7</sup> that set out how Wessex Water will enhance their assets and networks to ensure they continue to deliver for their customers and the environment in a sustainable and affordable way and in the face of future challenges such as population growth and climate change. These will inform their submission to business plan submission to Ofwat in 2024, known as PR24, which sets out the level of investment over the period 2025 – 2030. Pollution risk has been identified as very significant, sewer collapse risk as moderately significant, blockages risk as moderately significant, risk associated with 1 in 50 year storms as very significant, storm water overflow performance risk as moderately significant, and risk of water recycling centre flow compliance failure as very significant. Compared to other catchments in the Wessex Water area, these combined risks are seen as a relatively small problem to address but moderately difficult to deliver. The plan to address these risks is available online<sup>8</sup>. Combined Sewage Overflows have discharged a number of times over the past three years, but not above a threshold where further action would take place.
2. Litter Free Dorset works with agencies, businesses, and local groups to engage with communities surrounding bathing water locations across the Dorset Coast and find collaborative solutions that improve everyone's enjoyment of Dorset beaches. LFD has previously worked in partnership with Sustainable Swanage and maintains a local presence via their work with community groups and promotion of the Sustainable Business Network.
3. Riverfly Surveys have been taking place over last two years in one location on the Swan Brook, as part of a partnership programme to monitor sites across Purbeck, set up by Dorset Wildlife Trust and the National Trust. Two additional sites on the Swan catchment have been identified, pending ground-truthing and additional volunteer capacity.
4. Water quality assessments have been ongoing on National Trust tenanted farmland which falls into the Swan Brook catchment, in 11 locations since 2021. A further two locations for Water quality assessments have just started (Autumn 2023).
5. A programme of freshwater awareness has been established as part of Planet Purbeck.
6. National Trust have developed an outline programme of wetland restoration projects including the headwaters of several tributaries within the Swan catchment, schedule for implementation beginning in 2024. These are mostly on tenant farms and are part of a wider transition towards more nature-friendly and environmentally resilient farming systems.

### Future action

Partners:

1. Follow up with Wessex Water to help deliver ambitions set out in their Draining and Waste Water Management Plans and their forthcoming business plan for 2025-2030.
2. Support farmers to access funding that allows them to manage their land better for the water environment. Enhanced payment rates are now available specifically for this through Countryside Stewardship. Further options also include:

<sup>7</sup> <https://wessexwater.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=e371301c24ca4228b36db3a3a6ba8560>

<sup>8</sup> <https://maps.wessexwater.co.uk/webapps/dwmp/docs/strategies/29541-swanage-drainage-and-wastewater-strategy.pdf>

- 
- a. Farming in Protected Landscapes: a grant programme to help farmers deliver projects that benefit, nature, climate, people, and place. It runs until March 2025<sup>9</sup>.
  - b. Woodland Creation Grants from the Forestry Commission. There are high priority areas for woodland planting along the fringes of the brook that address water quality<sup>10</sup>.
  - c. Catchment Sensitive Farming<sup>11</sup>
  3. An application for Defra funding for NFM measures on seven National Trust tenanted farmland sites within the Swan Catchment has been submitted. Outcome expected February 2024. If unsuccessful, alternative funds will be sought for this proposed National Trust led programme of catchment/wetland restoration works in Purbeck.
  4. A wider landscape-scale monitoring plan is being developed for South Purbeck, which will incorporate the Swan Brook Catchment Plan, alongside monitoring of habitats, species, soils, coastal erosion, and the impacts of people. If successfully implemented, this will form part of the Purbeck Landscape Recovery project.
  5. Promote community engagement and awareness activities which encourage an appreciation of the Swan Brook, a better understanding of the issues facing the condition of the catchment and solutions to improve it.
  6. Involve local communities in catchment restoration through consultation with the community, partner-led activities and advocating for / supporting “at-home initiatives.” Potential community-led actions could include:
    - a. Advocating for reduced water usage in Swanage.
    - b. Advocating to reduce negative impacts of dogs (flea treatment pollution) and litter.
    - c. Creating an opportunity map for initiatives e.g., pond creation & natural flood management.
    - d. Implement Slow the Flow initiatives on private and communal land (e.g., gardens & schools); and participate in guided volunteering activities to Slow the Flow on farmland.
    - e. Identify and remove invasive plants on the watercourse.
    - f. Participate in a programme of water monitoring (e.g., water chemistry sampling, Riverfly, Water Guardian programme, fixed point photography, target species monitoring).

## Approach

Combining the issues facing the Swan Brook, and opportunities – either already being delivered or explored in the future – into an action plan will help focus efforts of citizens & communities, environmental NGOs, and statutory agencies.

A draft for discussion is presented below:

<sup>9</sup> <https://dorset-nl.org.uk/resource/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.forestergis.com/Apps/MapBrowser/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/catchment-sensitive-farming-reduce-agricultural-water-pollution>

Theme	Action	Timescale	Likely cost	Who will deliver it	Who's it aimed at	What will it tackle				
						Flood	Morphology	Land management	Habitat	Behaviour & knowledge
<b>Partnership</b>	Establish a locally based partnership to oversee delivery	Short	££	Sustainable Swanage	Communities, Farmers & Land Managers, Statutory agencies, NGOs					X
<b>Partnership</b>	Work with statutory agencies to raise the profile of the Swan Brook and ensure that action is taken to improve its conditions	Ongoing	££	Dorset National Landscape	Statutory agencies	X			X	X
<b>Raise awareness</b>	Raise awareness of the issues facing the Swan Brook, and what people can do to help	Ongoing	££	Planet Purbeck, Sustainable Swanage	Communities					X
<b>Raise Awareness</b>	Use this plan as an engagement tool to better understand the issues facing the Swan Brook and seek help to deliver the ambitions set out in it.	Short term	££	Sustainable Swanage, Swanage Town Council	Communities, Farmers & Land Managers					X
<b>Increased understanding</b>	Develop and deliver a strategic monitoring plan for citizen scientists	Short term – development Ongoing – delivery	£££	National Trust, Dorset National Landscape	Communities, Farmers & Land Managers					X
<b>Increased understanding</b>	Support ongoing and new water quality assessment	Short term	££	National Trust	Communities, Farmers & Land Managers					X
<b>Increased understanding</b>	Deliver landscape-scale monitoring of the Swan Brook Catchment	Ongoing	£££	National Trust	Communities, Farmers & Land Managers					X
<b>Work with farmers</b>	Support farmers in the Swan Brook catchment to better manage their land for water: support to enter Countryside Stewardship	Ongoing	££££	National Trust	Farmers & Land Managers	X	X	X	X	
<b>Work with farmers</b>	Support farmers in the Swan Brook catchment to better manage their land for water: delivery of Natural Flood Management	Medium term	££££	National Trust	Farmers & Land Managers	X	X	X	X	
<b>Work with farmers</b>	Support farmers in the Swan Brook catchment to better manage their land for water: habitat restoration	Ongoing	££££	National Trust, Dorset National Landscape	Farmers & Land Managers	X	X	X	X	

'Likely cost' key:

- £ = tens of pounds
- ££ = hundreds of pounds
- £££ = thousands of pounds
- ££££ = large complex projects requiring a mix of revenue and capital funds in the region of thousands of pounds

## Summary

The Swan Brook is a small stream with the market town of Swanage at its mouth. It drains a pastoral catchment with varied geology, considering its size: chalk to the north, limestone to the south, and clay in between. Woodland and intensively managed grassland are the predominant land cover, along with a sizeable urban coverage. The entire catchment is within the Dorset National Landscape, and it borders the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. Within it are several nationally and internationally important wildlife designations.

The Swan Brook is classified as poor by the Environment Agency is therefore considered a failing watercourse in need of improvement. The main reasons for failure for their perspective is the impact of flood defences on plant life within the stream. However, a wider consultation with local organisations, farmers and business identified further issues. The combined issues are summarised below:

- Degraded channel morphology, leading to unnatural conditions & faster flow. This in turn leads to and diminished plant life and increased flood risk.
- Elevated levels of sediment and nutrients within the channel, smothering gravels and reducing oxygen levels. This in turn leads to diminished fish, plant, and insect life.
- Loss of wetland habitat, leading to increased flood risk and diminished wildlife.

If we, in partnership with citizens, communities, and farmers of the catchment, want to make a difference to the state of the Swan Brook, there are some steps we need to take. These are summarised below:

### *Partnership building*

To deliver on our collective vision for the Swan Brook, we need to establish an effective locally led partnership to oversee delivery. We also need to effectively engage with statutory agencies, so that they can help adopt and deliver on our shared ambitions.

### *Awareness raising*

As well as practical hands-on opportunities to improve the state of the river, walks, talks, demonstrations and other awareness raising activities could take place to highlight the success of any projects and highlight what could be done about some of the issues, for example better septic tank management.

### *Knowledge & understanding*

Interested community members could be trained in simple river monitoring techniques, from looking at the insect life that lives in the stream through the chemical properties of the water. Undertaking regular monitoring would give the community early warning of pollution incidents and an opportunity to inform the relevant authorities. It would also allow the community to monitor the effectiveness of any restoration undertaken. It would also create a sense of ownership and pride in this important habitat. Greater frequency of monitoring would also allow us to strengthen the statutory agencies' basic monitoring regime.

Further research, with the help of interested community members, could help improve our understanding of water quality issues faced by the brook, and the ideal geomorphological conditions we should be aiming for.

Further work could also be undertaken to identify hotspots for invasive species, habitat loss and erosion, and where there are opportunities for re-wilding rivers.

### *Enhancement*

This would restore the natural processes of the river and floodplain where it has been altered. This would allow aquatic plants and fish species to thrive. Looking beyond the river itself, reconnecting the river to the floodplain



and restoring wet woodland and wet grassland would help the river both to function naturally and to better connect isolated habitats throughout the catchment.

By working with the farming community in the catchment to make changes to the way the land is managed, we could reduce sediment runoff and therefore nutrient pollution. It could also improve rainwater infiltration and therefore delay and reduce flood peaks.

At strategic locations throughout the catchment, interventions such as small leaky woody dams, gully blocking, removal of land drains, and tree and hedge planting could be installed to slow the flow of water over the land and increase storage of water within the soils. By doing this we could delay and potentially reduce flood peaks and reduce sediment runoff. The nature of the works involved would allow volunteers to help with delivery.

## Environmental Community Engagement

### 1) Introduction

Environmental community engagement is included within the Town Council's 2020 Environmental Policy which has the following policy aim: "Encouraging, educating and embedding environmental best practice - We will work with the community and other stakeholders to encourage environmental best practice". This can be found as Appendix 1.

It is also noted that the Town Council's Corporate Plan 2023-25 states that up to March 2025, the Town Council will 'Continue to support Sustainable Swanage'.

To date, the environmental community engagement role has been undertaken by the Sustainable Swanage Project Officer with the support the Sustainable Swanage Steering Group.

With the current Sustainable Swanage Project Officer moving on, and Dorset Coast Forum unable to continue hosting the role, this paper will consider how to continue the work that connects the community and the Town Council's environmental action plan.

### 2) Sustainable Swanage

Sustainable Swanage was set up in 2019 as part of the 'Plastic Free Town' initiative. Since 2021, The Town Council has funded a Sustainable Swanage Project Officer two days per week, at a cost of £20,000 per annum, with the overall employment contract being hosted by Dorset Coast Forum. The Project Officer's work was supported by the Sustainable Swanage Steering Group, which comprises community representatives and Town Council observers.

The Sustainable Swanage Project Officer's work essentially involved supporting the community to get involved in setting up and running projects that improve Swanage's carbon footprint and improve the biodiversity of this beautiful area by working with residents and other organisations (Dorset Council, Dorset National Landscape (formerly Dorset AONB), Dorset Coast Forum, Litter Free Beach and Sea, Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust and Planet Purbeck for example) to encourage our community to reduce waste, conserve energy, 'green' Swanage, support local flora and fauna, and look after our beach and town.

This harnessed many volunteer hours to support the Town Council's environmental action plan. Examples of what has been achieved include:

- Overseeing the setting up and running Sustainable Swanage website and Facebook page
- Setting up the Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve
- Setting up the Prospect Green Pocket Park
- Running the Herston Community Field May Day event
- Tree planting and watering
- Solar streets - project to support residents to install reduced cost solar panels
- Energy leaflet to all households with tips on how to reduce energy use
- Community pantry recycling Swanage waste food to local families
- Butterfly counting and Swift project
- Repair Café – enabling clothes and household items to be re-used, not thrown away

- Bi monthly meetings with different speakers to inform and involve the community
- Groups looking at involving businesses in reducing waste, encouraging ‘active travel’ – walking/cycling

One of the key reasons for funding the Sustainable Swanage Project Officer was due to limited staff capacity within STC to deliver on many of the actions identified in the Town Council’s ‘Environment Action Plan’. To date, Dorset Coast Forum has provided public liability insurance for the work of the Project Officer and volunteers, managed financial resources and provided management advice as required.

### **3) Environmental Community Engagement for 2024-25**

For the 2024-25 financial year, the Town Council has continued to set aside £20,000 to support environmental projects. The Sustainable Swanage Action Plan attached at Appendix 3 (and updated for this meeting), was assumed to be delivered by Sustainable Swanage over a three-year timetable from 2022-23 to 2024-25. Many of these projects are underway, such as the Swan Brook Partnership and the Purbeck Repair Café, but without continued support they are at risk of not achieving their ambitions until they can be embedded in the community, as is the case with the Community Pantry and the Friends of the Downs.

In Appendix 2, a number of potential projects that might fit within the ‘environmental community engagement’ remit have been identified. The Committee are asked to consider if these projects are suitable for taking forward as a ‘2024-25 Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan’.

It is proposed that the Council use an element of the allocated funding to procure an external Project Officer to support the delivery of the Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan for 2024-25. Procuring such a service to deliver a defined action plan for the year will ensure suitable resources both in terms of time and staff capacity are available as required. A more ad-hoc project-based approach is possible, but this would have to be managed alongside council officers’ other workload.

### **4) Decisions Required**

- 5.1 To determine whether or not to approve the ‘Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan 2024-25’.
- 5.2 To consider approving the use of an external resource to deliver the Action Plan, to be paid from the £20,000 Environmental Projects budget.
- 5.3 To delegate to officers the procurement of external support, noting that any single commitment in excess of £10,000 would be brought back to a future Council meeting for approval.
- 5.4 Delegate to the Environmental Action Plan Working Party, oversight of the Environmental Community Action Plan 2024-25

Culvin Milmer  
Visitor Services and Business Development Manager

February 2024

## Appendix 1

# Swanage Town Council Environment Policy (Draft)

Swanage Town Council is committed to the continued development of a sustainable community, balancing and integrating economic, social and environmental components. Developing a more sustainable community will benefit present-day residents and build a community able to meet the increasing environmental challenges that will be faced as climate change impacts locally.

Swanage Town Council reiterates the 'Climate Crisis' motion that it adopted on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 which includes a recognition "that there is a serious climate crisis".

Swanage Town Council will ensure that environmental considerations are put at the heart of how we operate our functions and services and deal with stakeholders at all levels of our activities.

This policy covers premises directly managed by Swanage Town Council and includes council buildings, the beach, boat park and parks and gardens.

Our six policy aims are outlined below.

### **Managing the Town Council in an environmentally sustainable manner**

We shall ensure that sustainability is at the heart of how we manage the Town Council and its functions

### **Encouraging, educating and embedding environmental best practice**

We will work with the community and other stakeholders to encourage environmental best practice

### **Managing our built environment sustainably**

We are directly responsible for both historic and modern buildings and infrastructure which will be managed sustainably

### **Protecting local infrastructure**

By working with the community and stakeholders we will strive to protect and enhance local infrastructure in order to retain a vibrant and sustainable town

### **Protecting and enhancing the natural environment**

We are directly responsible for a wide range of natural environments and will work to enhance these and look to support initiatives that enhance other natural areas within the town

### **Supporting sustainable tourism**

We shall support the town's tourism economy through the promotion of sustainable tourism

Swanage Town Council will achieve this policy through working with the community and the establishment of an Environmental Action Plan. This policy will be reviewed by the Town Council at least annually.

February 2020

## Appendix 2 – Draft Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan

No.	Project	Action Plan no.
1.	Lead on the education component of Sustainable Swanage, i.e. develop a two monthly programme of interesting Open Meetings	Sustainable Swanage 8
2.	Repair Café – develop individuals to take this on and ensure it is independent (its all set up now but doesn't yet have a lead)	Sustainable Swanage 7
3.	Swan Brook Partnership – currently includes National Trust, Planet Purbeck, Litter Free Dorset and Sustainable Swanage.	Sustainable Swanage 14
4.	Work with local businesses, waste collection partners and local councils to reduce the impact of waste on the seafront environment.	Sustainable Swanage 2
5.	Undertake greenspaces review of King Georges Field and Forres Field	Community Services minute Nov 2023
6.	Support/run a 'picnic in the park' at Herston Community Field – May 2024	Sustainable Swanage 8
7.	Set up a Tree Warden scheme in Swanage	Sustainable Swanage 14
8.	Support the Sustainable Swanage website and social media pages	Sustainable Swanage 10
9.	Support the implementation of the Motion for Ocean Action Plan where it requires the community engagement	Sustainable Swanage 14
10.	Support engagement projects as they arise from time to time as approved by STC	Sustainable Swanage 14

## Sustainable Swanage Quarterly Review – February 2024

The following table is the 3-year programme established for Sustainable Swanage 2022/23 to 2024/25

	<b>Project</b>	<b>How might success be tracked?</b>	<b>Feb 2024 Update</b>	<b>Possible future plans</b>
1.	Develop a business forum which delivers tangible environmental improvements to the local area. Current thinking is that businesses should be engaged and supported to develop carbon neutrality strategies	The number of local businesses that have developed a carbon neutral plan.	While some progress has been made with a small number of businesses, it has been challenging to really deliver tangible benefits with businesses and it is felt that this area of work should be suspended unless a suitable business volunteer is found to lead on this.	Develop the ‘Sustainable Retailers Group’ to grow the concept of local sustainable shopping and business awards.
2.	Work with local businesses, waste collection partners and local councils to reduce the impact of waste on the seafront environment	A reduction in litter collected by Beach Buddies and/or less overflowing bins and side waste	No further work undertaken in this area during 2023 but some ideas have been developed for possible implementation in 2024.	Promote seafront toy library and work with Litter Free Dorset.
3.	Complete the establishment of the Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve	LNR established	Complete and now under STC	Maintain and develop the Friends Group with the ambition that they become self-sufficient.  Species list being recorded by volunteers.
4.	Continue to develop Prospect Park into a community space that enhances the environment	Being used regularly by the local community and appreciated by people, wildlife surveys	Ongoing. Trees well established and overseen by a small group of volunteers.	Install benches and signage. Event during Planet Purbeck festival.
5.	Develop and establish at least two additional green sites using the	Two green sites established	Anticipating that another event will be run at Herston Community Field in May 2024.	To review

	Green Infrastructure Strategy		Northbrook Copse now has a management plan and signage designed and installed.	
6.	Implement 'only rain down the drain' type artwork on the seafront in 2022 and if successful similar scheme in future years	Artwork implemented	Done - Artwork created for summer 2022.	Current artwork is still in good condition so considered not required for 2023 but in budget for 2024.
7.	Work with other organisations to contribute to setting up repair shop/café in Swanage.	Repair shop/café set up	The Purbeck Repair Café is now set up with insurance under the SPDT. However, currently this group has no 'lead' so hopefully someone will be found to build and develop the groundwork that was undertaken over the last two years.	Identify a lead and promote and develop group
8.	Run regular engagement activities (i.e. market stalls, Open Meetings) and develop a programme of events	A timetable of activities published	A number of event held in 2023 with a highlight being the Swanage Waterways in September	Continue to run informative and useful thematic open evenings
9.	Develop and implement ideas around reducing the use of fossil fuelled vehicles in Swanage and including developing ideas around making movement around the town in a sustainable way easier and safer for residents and visitors	This could be a range of outputs which might include increased bike facilities, electric car points, walking routes, promotional and engagement activities such as car free days etc	Continue to support STC with regards the Rights of Way project and the establishment of a volunteer group. A good number of paths have now been graded by the volunteers. However the small group that looked at active travel has now folded due to lack of volunteers.	To review
10.	Continue to enhance and develop the website and social media	Increase in visits and followers	Website now complete <a href="#">Sustainable Swanage - WELCOME TO SUSTAINABLE SWANAGE</a> Regular posts on social media	Continue to maintain website and social media
11.	Support and develop a Swanage Community Fridge	Community Pantry established	Established	Continue support but no longer required to be directly involved.
12.	Support efforts to increase	This could be a range of	Unfortunately, Solar Streets has now	Continue to promote

	awareness locally of energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes. Where possible, increase access to national and local schemes to promote installations that reduce energy use and facilitate the move to renewable energy	outputs leading to increased uptake of renewable energy schemes locally	disbanded due to supply issues. However, work continues with the Green Homes open houses in September 2023.	renewable energy where possible.
13.	Develop a robust governance structure to ensure that the projects and funding can continue after March 2025	Governance roles developed and enhanced, and a clear role structure exists to continue developing local projects and identifying other grants and funding sources. A 'Future Options' report to be produced in 2023-24.	Challenging to see how Sustainable Swanage could become an independent group at the current time.	To review
14.	Support the community in developing projects that have local support and interest	This will vary depending on the project but two examples to date might be the Swift project and the work around Bodyboards	Supported 3 local primary schools with a mini-bioblitz in the leadup to our Bioblitz day, worked with approx. 300 school children and delivered 2 assemblies.	To review