

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 8th OCTOBER 2025** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council (until 3:45 p.m.)

Councillor S Vile

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms K Black

Durlston Country Park

Mr T Clarke

National Trust

Mr P Floyd

Planet Purbeck

Mr L Luke

Planet Purbeck

Mrs J Owens

Sustainable Swanage

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk (until 3 p.m.)

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager (VSBDM)

Ms G Percival

Assets & Compliance Manager

Mr M Snowdon

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

Mr I Alexander

Natural England

Mr C Peck

Principal Transport Planner, Dorset Council

Mr A Young

Purbeck Energy Group

There was one member of the public and one member of the press present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

The following matter was raised during Public Participation Time: -

- **Agenda item 10)** – A question was raised around the relevance of the Active Travel Plan, currently being developed by Dorset Council, to the needs of Swanage residents. Furthermore, it was queried how the Active Travel Plan would link into the wider Dorset Local Plan, Transport Plan and Swanage Town Council's Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme.

1) Apologies

Apologies for the inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Dorrington and Mr D Pratten (Beach Buddies).

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 25th June 2025**

No matters were raised on this occasion.

4) **Matters arising from the Meeting of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 1st October 2025**

The Chairman of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee provided the following updates:

- The meeting had been attended by four pupils and a teacher from St Mary's School who asked the Committee several questions. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor thanked the pupils for attending and would arrange a visit to the school to discuss some of the topics raised with the students in more detail.
- It was noted that the period for receiving applications for the beach hire concession, to include deckchairs and watercraft, is currently underway.
- Discussions had been held regarding the potential consultation period relating to the by-laws for Swanage Bay.

5) **Environment Action Plan Task & Finish Group - Report**

Further to Minute No. 10 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, Members noted the contents of the updated version of the Environment Action Plan. The Task & Finish group had met in September 2025 and identified seven items within the Action Plan as significantly important to progress in the next period. It was anticipated that by establishing Priority Actions, officer time would be better utilised on these items.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Vile and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To approve the reclassification of the seven identified actions within section 2 of the Action Plan as Priority Actions.

The Task & Finish Group had also identified several actions contained within the Action Plan that were outside of Town Council control. To aid in streamlining the Action Plan, it was suggested that these actions should be removed.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To approve the deletion of the identified actions within section 3 of the Action Plan.

6) **Consideration of energy efficiencies for Council Buildings**

Further to Minute No. 7 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, Members noted the details contained within the Energy Efficiency Action Plan. Several actions had been identified that would be achievable within the 2025/26 financial period by the Council Operations Department and would be funded from the Council's Environmental Projects Reserve, which is set aside for energy improvements.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To approve the actions as set out in Section 1 of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan for completion within the 2025/26 financial period, with the

improvements to be funded from the Environmental Projects Reserve.

7) Motion for the Ocean Action Plan - Update

Further to Minute No. 5 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, the Chairman provided a summary of the ‘Motion for the Ocean’ Action Plan. Recent activities were noted, which included the marine bio audit conducted in August, which had received a reasonable level of support from volunteers and members of the public, with numerous submissions made via the website. Other actions included the improvement of beach information signage, as well as the proposed installation of new signs highlighting the marine life located within Swanage Bay, subject to the successful receipt of funding.

8) Sustainable Swanage - Update

The representative of Sustainable Swanage provided an update on recent and future planned activities. Since the last meeting of this committee, Sustainable Swanage had assisted with the recent maritime bio audit of Swanage Bay by maintaining a stall on the seafront to support the event and promote engagement with visitors and residents. In addition to this, further public engagement took place at the following events:

- A forerunner meeting to the bio-audit, generating additional interest and support for Motion for the Ocean titled “Swanage Bay, what’s in it?” which was attended by over 50 people.
- September saw Sustainable Swanage support Planet Purbeck with the Discovery Festival held on Swanage seafront.

Further to the public engagement activities, a summary was provided on the progress of the groups set up and supported by Sustainable Swanage:

- The Repair and Re-use café which was launched at Herston Village Hall in April 2025 has continued to be well attended with repairs being carried out from sewing to small electrical repairs.
- The Recycling group had spent time engaging with local retailers and businesses to establish what their recycling arrangements were since the recent changes in legislation and the increased responsibility of businesses to provide avenues for the recycling of goods that they sell.
- The Greener group held a meeting primarily relating to the Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve, bringing together the Wildflower surveys that had been completed which showed the increase in biodiversity year on year.

Moving forward, Sustainable Swanage intends to investigate the feasibility of establishing a marine group.

9) Swanage Streams Partnership update

The representative for Planet Purbeck provided an update on recent actions and forthcoming activities on the Swanage Streams Partnership. Since its inception in November 2024, several Swanage Streams Partnership events had been conducted including walking tours and presentations to groups such as the Rotary, Lions and the local WI on specific topics. Additional public interest had been achieved at third party events with the presence of the Planet Purbeck stall. In total that had resulted in engagement with 2019 people. Planet Purbeck offered thanks to the Council officers and the staff of the Operations Department for their assistance in tidying sections of the Swan Brook stream and for the efforts to remove rubbish in the lead up to some of the events.

It was also noted that as well as the engagement activities to promote greater public awareness, practical activities had also taken place including the training of five volunteers to carry out six monthly monitoring tasks, looking at the technical aspects of river morphology. 10 volunteers had undergone training to carry out river fly monitoring which is part of a national scheme with 14 monitoring surveys carried out between July and September 2025.

10) Dorset Council's Active Travel Infrastructure Plan - Update

The Principal Transport Planner for Dorset Council gave a presentation providing an overview of the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan, which was a long-term strategy for improvements to routes for walking, cycling, and accessibility for people with disabilities. The primary focus of the plan was to examine the day-to-day travel requirements of residents, including commuting to work and employment areas, school runs, shopping, and travel to other destinations. It was an iterative document, with Purbeck being one of seven areas defined within Dorset. The assessments carried out aimed to identify which routes would generate the greatest benefits from any investments made.

The plan was necessary to secure financial support from Active Travel England and would also support future funding bids to central government. It was noted that during the consultation, which ran from December 2023 to January 2024, very few responses had been received from residents of Swanage and the surrounding areas. However, it was also acknowledged that the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan was not a specification of works to be completed but an assessment of travel habits, heavily used routes, and how these routes could be improved. Within Swanage, the highest priority areas identified were High Street, Shore Road, and Northbrook Road.

11) Herston Community Field Engagement – Update from Planet Purbeck

The representative for Planet Purbeck provided an update on the progress of the Herston Community Field Consultation project and detailed upcoming activities. Planet Purbeck had met with local organisations, such as Greengage Community Garden, to benefit from their local knowledge, as well as seeking advice from third parties with more experience in responding to public green space consultations.

The activities conducted to date were noted, and it was recognised that some of the planned public engagement activities had not proceeded due to their original scheduled dates falling within the purdah period for Local Authority elections. It was also noted that rescheduling these events during the peak summer months had proved difficult, as many other events and activities were already taking place. Members further noted that, with other consultations underway at the time and greenspaces typically receiving less usage during the Autumn and Winter months, any public events held during this period might not have received the same level of support or engagement.

A discussion was held on the merits of carrying out the public engagement events in November versus delaying them until Spring 2026, when the weather would be more favourable, the evenings lighter, and residents easier to engage. Members noted that delaying until Spring 2026 could potentially impact the timescales for certain actions detailed in the Green Space Strategy Action Plan. The Planet Purbeck representative confirmed that a report would be finalised by mid-May 2026. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Vile and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To approve the rescheduling of the Herston Community Field public engagement consultation events to Spring 2026 with the report being presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

12) Durlston Country Park – Actions to support proposed ‘Durlston and Purbeck Coast National Nature Reserve’

The representative for Durlston Country Park presented an overview of the collaborative work between Durlston Country Park, the National Trust and Dorset Wildlife Trust to extend the Durlston National Nature Reserve (NNR) to encompass Townsend Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and the National Trust land ownership along the coastal slopes in the area. As part of this process, a request was submitted to Swanage Town Council to extend the current lease of the land, south of Swanage Bay View Holiday Park to Dorset Council (Durlston Country Park) for an additional 15-21 years on a similar agreement to manage the land for nature conservation. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Councillor Sutton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND:-

That Council agree an extension to the current lease held by Dorset Council (Durlston Country Park), to be drawn up at the expense of Dorset Council.

Furthermore, a request was submitted to agree to the leased land being included in the proposed Durlston and Purbeck Coast National Nature Reserve. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Councillor Sutton, seconded by the Councillor Vile and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND:-

That Council agree to the inclusion of the land in the Council's ownership to the south of Swanage Bay View Holiday Park within the proposed Durlston and Purbeck Coast National Nature Reserve.

13) Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025 Action Plan Update

Further to Minute No. 11 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, the Assets and Compliance Manager provided an update on the progress to date of the Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025 Action Plan. It was reported that over 1,100 perennial bulbs had been planted over the past few weeks, and, due to a successful grant application, 105 trees have been obtained from Dorset Wildlife Trust which accompanies the 43 trees purchased by the Council. A number of locations have been identified for planting the trees and delivery is scheduled for November 2025. In addition to this, an application has been submitted to Dorset Community Tree Fund for match funding towards additional tree information signs, proposed to be placed in Day's Park. If this is successful, other locations will be considered for similar signage including Beach Gardens and Prospect Green.

The progress to date was noted along with the potential delay for the receipt of the engagement reports from Planet Purbeck as discussed in Minute No. 11 of this meeting.

14) Waste Management

a) Update on activities from Beach Buddies

An update was provided by the Chairman on behalf of Beach Buddies which reported that in 2025, there have been a total of 39 beach cleans carried out so far with a total removal of 729kg of litter and debris. This has been made possible by a pool of volunteers with an average of 19 attending each beach clean. It was also reported that the main beach was noticeably cleaner than previously recorded with thanks offered to the Council beach operatives for their work in achieving this.

b) Update on activities from Swanage Landers

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on their activities. It was reported that, although they had not formally met for two years, they had continued to provide encouragement and support to volunteers to carry out activities independently. Some of the heavier work had continued to be carried out using the Mechanical Road Sweeper (MRS) with the support of the Town Council's Operations Department. Special thanks were offered to the Town Council beach operatives for the early morning work carried out across the summer months, responding to incidents of extreme littering detected along the seafront and in some of the prominent adjoining greenspaces, which were not officially included within their patrol zones. This essential work had helped cover the shortfall in provision from Dorset Council, following the stepping down of the last remaining road sweeper position for the area in 2024, which had not been replaced, with an assurance that the number of MRS attendances would increase. Initial indications suggested that this increase had taken place, subject to Dorset Council staffing levels and barring any equipment malfunctions.

c) Dorset Council Waste Services Update

The Assets and Compliance Manager reported that the working relationship and communication between the Swanage Council Operations Department and Dorset Council Waste Services had been at a good level. There had been an increase in MRS attendances, with a target of one visit every two weeks, although this had been affected by a recall on the new MRS.

It was also reported that the summer service provided by Dorset Council Waste Services, operating from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week during the 2025 summer season, had been successful. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Assets and Compliance Manager would request from Dorset Council Waste Services the records and figures for the frequency of MRS attendances over the preceding 12 months.

14) Environmental Engagement Budget – update

- a) Further to Minute No. 14 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, the VSBDM provided an update on the Environmental Community Engagement budget approved for the 2025/26 financial period of £20,000. The figure included allocations for supporting the Swanage Streams Partnership, the Marine bio-audit (for the Motion for the Ocean Action Plan), and both the Herston Field and King George's Field stakeholder engagement projects. It was reported that the current forecast indicated that £13,650 of the budget would be utilised by the end of the 2025/26 financial period.

- b) Consideration was given to the proposed budget for 2025-26 which included essential items in order to meet the Council's safety and regulatory obligations and other items required for routine/planned maintenance of assets, at a total budget of £42,500. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To note the forecast spend of the Environmental Community Engagement budget for the current 2025/26 financial period.

It was further **RESOLVED:-**

That the one-off revenue items totalling £42,500, and continuation of the £25,000 per annum contribution to the Environmental Projects earmarked reserve, be taken forward to the meeting of the Finance &

Governance Committee to be held on 17th December 2025 for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2026/27.

15) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Herston Fields – concerns regarding access to Village Green

It was reported that several residents had raised concerns that the area in Herston, that had obtained Village Green status, was no longer open as a Village Green due to fencing that had been established in one field, gates installed in a second field and that some areas that had been ploughed. It was noted that the Town Clerk had approached the Open Spaces Society for guidance on this matter and a response was awaited. An update would be provided to a future meeting.

b) Tree Warden

The Chairman reported that a community event is scheduled to take place in November 2025 with the intention of introducing the Tree Warden scheme and securing three or four volunteers that would work alongside the Grounds & Estates Manager in progressing this project.

c) Solar Together Dorset – Dorset Council

The VSBDM reported that a new scheme had been launched by Dorset Council with the aim of assisting Dorset residents in securing better prices while procuring Solar Panels for their own properties.

16) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday 4th March 2026.

The Meeting closed at 4.00 p.m.
