

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2019)4
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 september 2019
at the 1352th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: ***United Kingdom***

Name of the area: ***Purbeck Heritage Coast***

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

Renewal granted 4th September 2019 for 10 years (5 years since renewal)

Central authority concerned:

Name: Dorset Council
Address: County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ
Tel: 01305 228237
Fax: 01305 224835
e-mail: tom.munro@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
www: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/home

Authority responsible for its management:

Name: Dorset National Landscape Partnership
Address: c/o Dorset County Council, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ
Tel: 01305 228237
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¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. ensure that the terms of the agreement between Dorset County Council and Perenco are strictly adhered to; Perenco should continue to work to the highest standards;

The Wytch Farm oilfield's operating agreement with Dorset Council, the minerals planning authority, ensures:

1.1 Safety in operation and controls to ensure human and environmental health

1.2 Environmental management of areas in the estate in direct control of the company. Significant open habitat restoration has taken place; work continues. Perenco carries out a number of annual ecological surveys around its land management areas with positive results on species/diversity.

1.3 A contribution (£1,700,000) towards off-site environmental improvements in the landscape character areas affected, largely within the Purbeck Heritage Coast. This fund has now been committed to dedicated projects; many have completed.

1.4 Effective decommissioning and site restoration once the operation has ceased

This agreement was finalised in July 2017 and remains valid for the extent of oilfield operation (to be fully decommissioned and sites restored by 2037).

2. ensure that the enlargement of existing quarries or the opening of new quarries conform to the "exceptions" principle that they should only be permitted if they do not impair the character of the Purbeck Heritage Coast as a result of any one or a combination of the following:

- the scale and duration of the project;
- the negative impact on the landscape, wildlife and the enjoyment of the area by the public or local communities;
- the practical impossibility of achieving satisfactory restoration and aftercare within a period of five years following the cessation of work;

With the exception of one, all enlargements or new quarries clearly conform to the exception principle above. The exception, where conformity is not certain, is Swanworth Quarry. On the 15th December 2023, Dorset Council granted planning permission for an extension to Swanworth Quarry within the Purbeck Heritage Coast. It's location is within the Heritage Coast's southern portion, 600m from the northerly boundary between Kingston and Langton Matravers sitting 3.5km north of St. Aldhelm's Head. It can be seen in the centre of [this map](#), showing the Heritage Coast in red hatching. Relevant planning documents can be found online [here](#).

In context, the site was previously appraised by a Planning Inspector in the making of Dorset Mineral Sites Plan (subsequently adopted in 2019) and found to be of strategic importance for the continued supply of crushed rock. This established a proven need that was given substantial weight when the subsequent application was determined. This plan allocation was mentioned in the 2019 Purbeck Heritage Coast annual report for the European Diploma for Protected Areas.

SCALE & DURATION: The proposed extension is approximately 14ha of land in agricultural use which would be worked as a quarry for 20 years, followed by a 7-year restoration period. 9.7ha of the existing quarry would be retained in use (rather than being restored to the current timetable) to enable the extension; in compensation 12.3ha of other land will be subject to habitat enhancement. A full restoration plan has been agreed that limits the extent of landform change and brings in an overall wildlife habitat enhancement

NEGATIVE IMPACT: In summary there will be negative effects over the course of the operation to landscape, wildlife and the enjoyment of the area, although these may be adequately offset by agreed mitigation actions and a compensation package to deal with residual effects.

During the process of assessing the proposed development, the Dorset AONB (now National Landscape) team and other consultees advised Dorset Council of likely negative impacts of the development to the character of the area of outstanding natural beauty and the Purbeck Heritage Coast, and by extension the risk of losing the valued European Diploma for Protected Areas. The Dorset AONB team recommended that the application be refused unless the development was accompanied with full mitigation in design and adequate compensation to deal with any residual effects. Negative impacts are described:

Landscape (and visual):

>Operational phase impacts (20+ yrs but ultimately temporary): impacts on tranquillity from noise and dust; incongruous landform.

>Permanent impacts result from landform change. The resulting landform is not, however, widely visible.

Wildlife:

>Operational phase impacts: loss of rough grassland (although adequately offset by in-scheme mitigation).

>Permanent effects: negative impacts are fully mitigated and through sensitive restoration, there is overall habitat gain

Enjoyment:

These impacts relate to the operational phase only:

>>noise & disturbance to users of Purbeck Way caused by operations. This is mitigated by limits on the operation times for the quarry.

>>lorry traffic impacts on the access route – there will be an increase in vehicle movements as stone is exported and inert waste imported. In respect to the Purbeck Heritage Coast, these will be on 450m of public road from the quarry entrance to the designation boundary, then 1700m eastwards to the village of Kingston.

RESTORATION & AFTERCARE: There is a full restoration scheme for all parts of the working quarry (total 51ha) which will instate calcareous grassland, rough grassland, lowland mixed and broadleaved woodland, mixed scrub, ponds and associated marshy grassland fringes.

In addition, residual impacts are being compensated for through the provision of a funding package from the developer, held by the planning authority, for distribution to projects which benefit the landscape character of the area.

APPENDED to this report is the relevant Dorset Council planning officer's report to the Planning Committee.

Ultimately it is for the expert panel for the Council of Europe Diploma for Protected Areas to decide if this is a significant enough breach of condition 2 to merit withdrawal of the award. For the Dorset National Landscape team, the decision is disappointing and will result in some harms, particularly over the operational period. However, these are reasonably mitigated against, are compensated for, and the restoration plan is ultimately nature-positive. To consider in balance:

>> the extension is a very small area of the entire Purbeck Heritage Coast

>> main residual impacts are visual and perceptual; the extent to which these properties are essential to the renewal of the Diploma might be subservient to the wildlife qualities in this landscape which was judged to be 'non-pristine' by the expert report in 2019: T-PVS/DE(2019/1).

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. secure appropriate funding incentives for continuing environmentally friendly management of the landscape;

The Wild Purbeck partnership is working to secure funds for significant landscape enhancements through UK Government's Landscape Recovery scheme. A partnership of over 40 individuals and organisations was brought together to make an application to Round 2 of this scheme – this bid failed, but the partnership remains enthused to make an application for the 3rd round when this becomes available. If successful a grant would be available to undertake significant environmental baselining and negotiating environmental enhancement actions with landowning and tenant partners. Over the course of around 2 years the partners are expected to devise a single land management plan for over 20 years to be supported by blended finance (public and private investment). A significant terrestrial portion of the Heritage Coast would fall under this if successful (80% of the northern portion and the eastern half of the southern).

Following the giving of permission to the Swanworth Quarry extension, a compensation fund will become available to support environmentally friendly landscape management.

2. promote and improve public transportation and more sustainable methods of transport, particularly near the most visited sites;

The Wytch Farm Fund is supporting Dorset Council's work on a cycling route from Corfe Castle to Studland encouraging active exploration of the peninsula, particularly the honeypot site of Studland.

The seasonal bus service 2RN has been supported by many partners, notably the RSPB, to shuttle visitors to the popular Arne reserve from Wareham. This has been a great success. The Beryl Bike hire scheme has also been extended into Studland and Swanage to facilitate active travel.

3. monitor the number of visitors in order to determine their impact on the environment; a visitor-management strategy should be prepared for the areas with the largest number of visitors in order to avoid any negative impact either on the quality of the recreational experience or on the natural treasures of the Purbeck Heritage Coast;

Visitor numbers are recorded at the main honeypot sites, but it remains difficult to quantify numbers of visitors across the whole landscape. Efforts continue to manage the effects of recreational impacts and to manage visitors away from the most sensitive sites. This is being led in the northern heathland areas, but this experience is being also utilised in the south.

National Trust lead on the Sustainable Tourism Forum, bringing outdoor experience providers, land managers and hospitality businesses together. A bid for funds is being made to create and deliver a sustainable tourism plan for Purbeck.

4. consider further investments to improve the habitat and landscape connectivity within the Purbeck Heritage Coast;

The Landscape Recovery proposal (mentioned at 2.1 above) would see significant landscape connectivity improvements across an area of approximately 8,000 hectares, linking the heathlands with the coast via the ridge and army ranges, and covering most of the coast from Kimmeridge to Swanage, and from Swanage north around the southern shore of Poole Harbour.

Forestry England, partner in the Purbeck National Nature Reserve (occupying much of the northern part of the Heritage Coast) have commissioned a study to examine the potential for the reintroduction of bison to the heaths, to expand the grazing guild and specifically as an obligate browser which would be likely to control some of the scrub and smaller woody vegetation.

A chough reintroduction project is under way on the southern part of the Heritage Coast, reflecting the habitat improvements since these birds were lost from this area over 100 years ago.

5. promote the monitoring of the main species and habitats in the area and encourage partners to co-ordinate efforts and produce high-quality data for the whole diploma-holding area;

The Purbeck Natural Heritage Forum continues to be a central point for biodiversity recording volunteering mainly around the heaths, being guided and led by experts from Natural England, RSPB, National Trust and Amphibian and Reptile Trust. High quality data is fed into, and managed by Dorset Environmental Records Centre.

The monitoring strategy for the Purbeck Heaths NNR is widely known as being a national exemplar of good and innovative practice.

6. initiate studies focusing on the biological control of invasive alien species occurring in the Purbeck Heritage Coast, particularly the Canada goose and the sika deer, and, if deemed necessary, prepare a strategic plan for their control.

Partners no longer consider the Canada goose to be a priority as impacts and harms are deemed to be low.

Significant efforts have been expended in the area to manage *Rhododendron ponticum* (supported by the Wytch Farm fund); areas of woodland have been effectively cleared of this harmful invasive. The coordinated management of Sika continues to improve, although funding it and developing supply chain strategies for enhancing local markets for venison will be key activities for the Landscape Recovery programme, if successful. A Deer Management Plan for the Purbeck Heaths has been written and a vast scale (40,000ha+) drone survey of deer is planned for February 2025. Outcomes of this will be presented to landowners with a roadmap for better coordination of control.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

Risk: Public finance continues to represent a risk; all conservation bodies are working hard to secure funds from alternative sources for the ongoing conservation of the Heritage Coast and surrounding area.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

No changes.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.
