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**REPORT**

**ON THE SPOT EXPERT APPRAISAL OF THE  
PURBECK HERITAGE COAST**

**(UNITED KINGDOM)**

4-5 June 2018

*Document prepared  
by Ms Ana Rainho (Portugal)*

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## BACKGROUND

The Purbeck Heritage Coast (Purbeck HC) was awarded the European Diploma of Protected Areas (EDPA) by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 June 1984 (Resolution (84)7). A set of three conditions and 14 recommendations were attached to the award. The EDPA was renewed to the Purbeck HC award after four period of five years on 19 June 1989 (Resolution (89)7), 5 September 1994 (Resolution (94)22), 9 September 1999 (Resolution (99)11), 5 May 2004 (Resolution (2004)9) and 21 October 2009 (Resolution CM/ResDip(2009)10). The latter Resolution renews the EDPA until 20 June 2019, attaching a new set of conditions and recommendations to the renewal.

The aim of this report is to summarize the results of the on-the-spot appraisal visit to the Purbeck HC. During the visit any changes in the reference situation were evaluated and the respect for the conditions and recommendations attached to the renewal of the award in 2009 were monitored, all with a view to the renewal of its EDPA in 2019. The appraisal visit was performed between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018 by Ana Rainho, as an independent expert. The Secretariat of the Council of Europe was not represented.

The visit followed roughly the original draft programme (see Annex I), with slight adjustments. This programme gave the expert the opportunity to informally meet and discuss diverse management issues with different stakeholders at the Purbeck HC, namely the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB), Dorset County Council (Dorset CC), Lulworth Estate, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), National Trust and Perenco

Many thanks are due to the Dorset AONB, especially to Tom Munro, for the warm welcoming and the excellent programme that facilitated the discussion and exchange of ideas between all participants during the 2-day visit. Thanks are also due for all the information provided.

The information made available by all attendees and particularly the AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 were the base for the preparation of this document. Other information resumed in this report was either made available by Tom Munro (Dorset AONB), compiled from the EDPA annual reports or the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for Sites UK0019863 St Albans Head to Durlston Head, UK0030038 Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes and UK0019861 Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs (available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselecion/> and <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/>).

## INTRODUCTION

The Purbeck HC is an area of *ca.* 16400 ha located in the southern coast of England, near Poole (Figure 1). It covers part of the peninsula of Purbeck a district of Dorset.

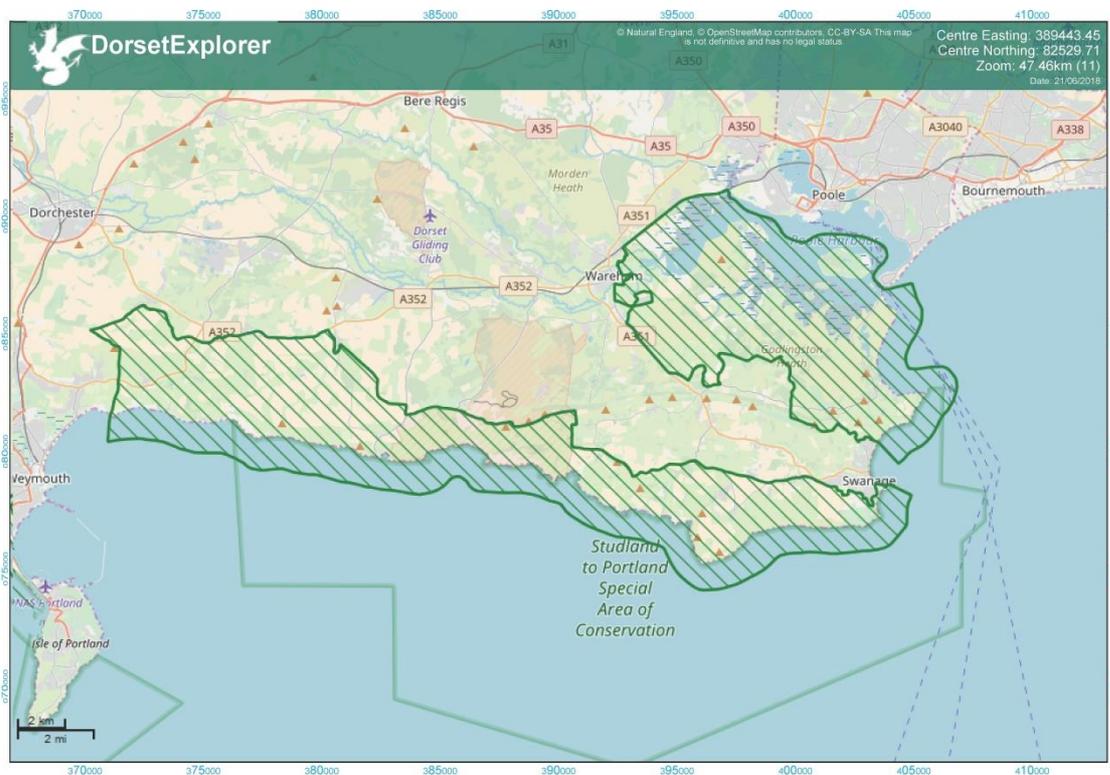


**Figure 1.** Location of the Purbeck heritage Coast in the southern coast of England (Landsat/Copernicus ©2018 Google).

The Diploma area consists of two blocks separated in great part by the Corfe valley, a region with historical intensive farming practices that currently is dominated by a patchwork of pastures and dense hedgerows and includes some important main settlements (Figure 2). The northern block includes part of the Pool harbour and its islands and it is dominated by heathland, while the southern block extends along the coast from the large town of Swanage westwards until the vicinity of Weimouth.

The Purbeck HC application to the EDPA in 1984 included the following description of the area, which is still very up to date:

*“The Purbeck Heritage Coast covers some 164 sq. kms in the south-east corner of the County of Dorset. It is an inhabited area with a number of small villages and a wide range of economic activities including agriculture, forestry, quarrying, oil production and tourism. Within the area certain sites have been set aside specifically for nature conservation and informal recreation.”*



**Figure 2.** Current limits of the Purbeck HR (green diagonal stripes). The two areas are separated by the Central Valley, a pastoral area that includes some important main settlements.

## APPRAISAL

### 1. European interest

#### Biological heritage

##### *i. Floristic interest*

Some of the natural high value of the Purbeck HC derives of the rich diversity of vegetation occurring in the region (Figure 3). Several habitats of European interest (Annex I of Habitats Directive) can be found in the Purbeck HC, including some priority habitats under the Directive. This is the case of fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (2130), Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (2150), temperate Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica ciliaris* and *Erica tetralix* (4020), calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion devallianae* (7210) and bog woodlands (91D0).

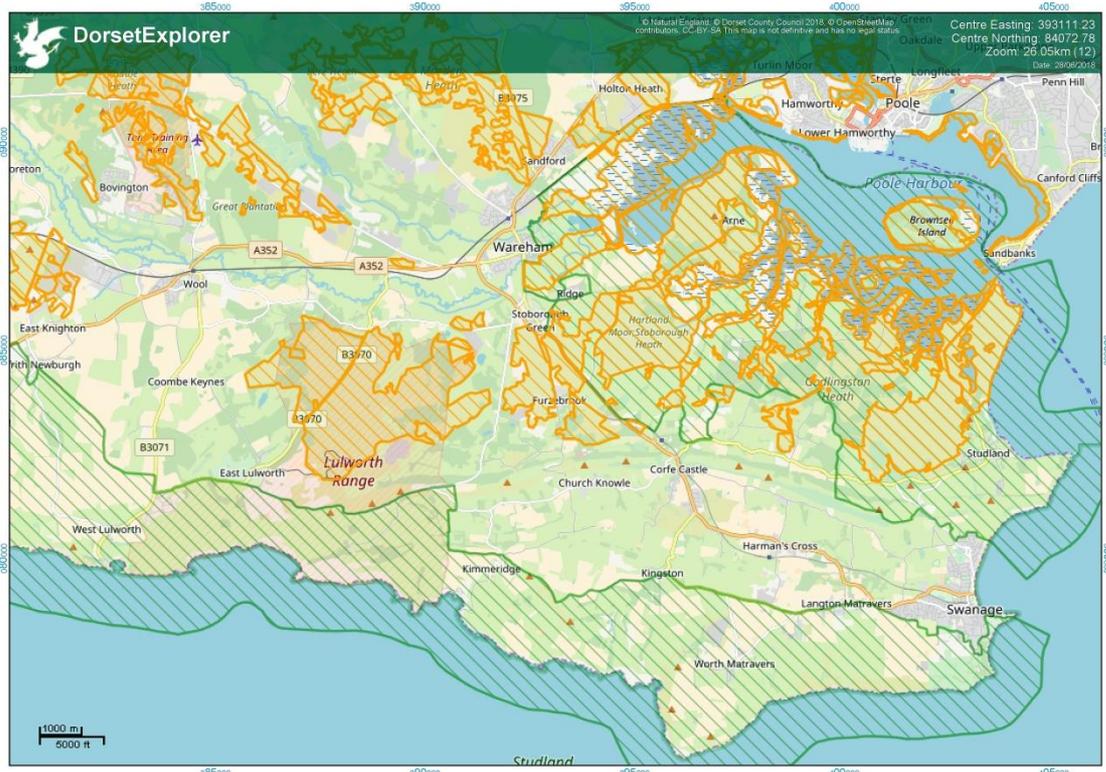
The diversity of habitats is accompanied by high plant richness present in the Purbeck HC, this including the early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*), one of the few endemic species of Great Britain and listed under the Annex II of the Habitats Directive. Other plant species worth mentioning are the early spider orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*) and the corky fruited water dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*). The area is also rich in lichens and fungus with some rare species present, like the sand earth-tongue (*Geoglossum arenarium*) and the goldeneye lichen (*Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*), recently discovered along the coast of England.



**Figure 3.** Coastal grasslands in Durlston Country Park and National Nature Reserve hosting a large assemblage of flowering species.

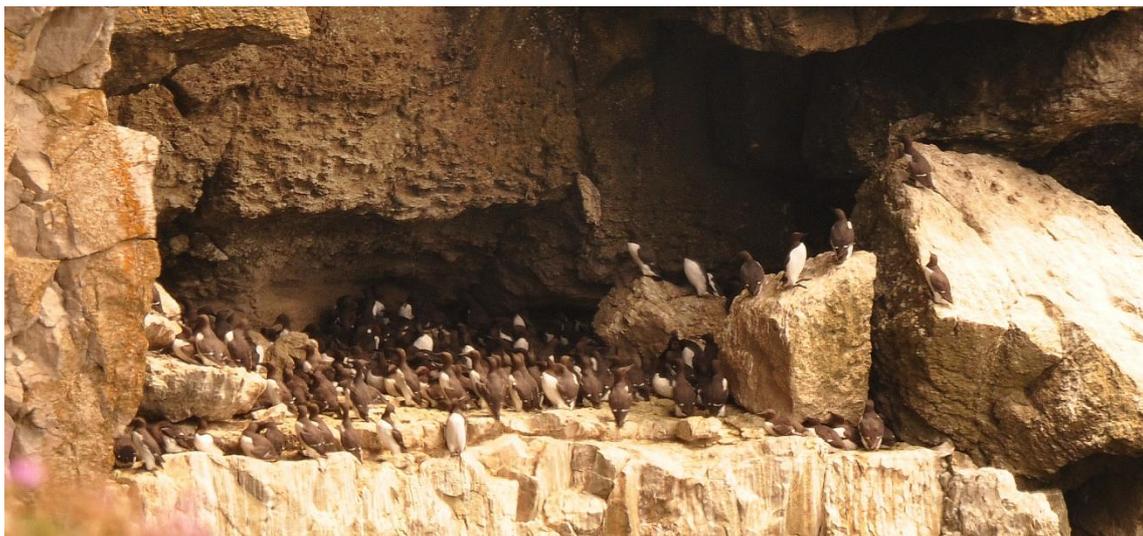
ii. Faunistic interest

Numerous animal species benefit from the diversity of habitats occurring in the Purbeck HC. The northern heathlands and part of the Pool harbour are included in two Natura 2000 Special Protection Areas (SPA): Dorset Heathlands (UK9010101) and Poole Harbour (UK9010111), confirming thus their importance for birds (Figure 4).



**Figure 4** – Location of the Natura 2000 Special Protection Areas (striped yellow) overlaying the Purbeck HC site (striped green)

Dorset Heathlands SPA is of European importance because, according to the 1994 survey, it is used by >1% of the UK population of Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undulata*), nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) and merlin (*Falco columbarius*). Poole harbour regularly supports 38.5% of the UK breeding population of the Mediterranean gull (*Larus melanocephalus*), 1.3% of the breeding population of the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and 36.1% of the wintering population of the pied avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*). In the south, the coastline is also important for several seabirds, like the common guillemot (*Uria aalge*, Figure 4), razorbill (*Alca torda*) and kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*).



**Figure 5** – A colony of common guillemot (*Uria aalge*) at Durlston Country Park and Nature Reserve.

Birds are the most visible part of Purbeck HC's fauna, but many other species inhabit the area. Invertebrates seem to be particularly diverse, with 35 species of butterfly and over 1000 species of moth already accounted for in the Durlston Country Park and Nature Reserve (Figure 6). Also worth mentioning the 33 species of land snails occurring in the region and the presence of the southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*) a globally near threatened species according to the IUCN Red Book, listed in the Annex II of the Habitats Directive. Two other species occurring in the region and also listed in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive are the Northern Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and the Greater-horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*). The mammal fauna also includes other nine bat species, red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and several species of marine mammals. The presence of the sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and the smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) in the area is also noticeable due to their very small distribution range in the country and the marginal location of the populations of these two mainly continental central European species. Most of the mentioned species are also strictly protected by the Bern Convention.

Finally, a reference to three breeding species occurring in the area and mentioned as non-native in the UK: the common wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*), the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) and the sika deer (*Cervus nippon*, Figure 6). Only the two latter species are listed by the UK non-native species secretariat (UK-NNSS) at the time of this report (<http://www.nonnativespecies.org>). According with the UK-NNSS, Canada geese have been established in the UK since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century but by the late 1980s the population of this species has shown a steady increase of ~10% per year. This species causes several impacts, namely heavy grazing and trampling aquatic and waterside native vegetation and the increase of nutrient levels in water bodies and soil; in fact, when abundant, the activity of this species may damage flood defences and accelerate bank erosion. Sika deer is a more recent species in the UK but is currently well established in many areas of the UK, increasing both in number and range. The UK-NNSS classifies this as a "serious forest pest" able to damage both broad-leaved and conifers.



**Figure 6** – Two non-native breeding species observed in the region during the appraisal visit – Canada goose (left) and sika deer (right).

#### Landscape interest

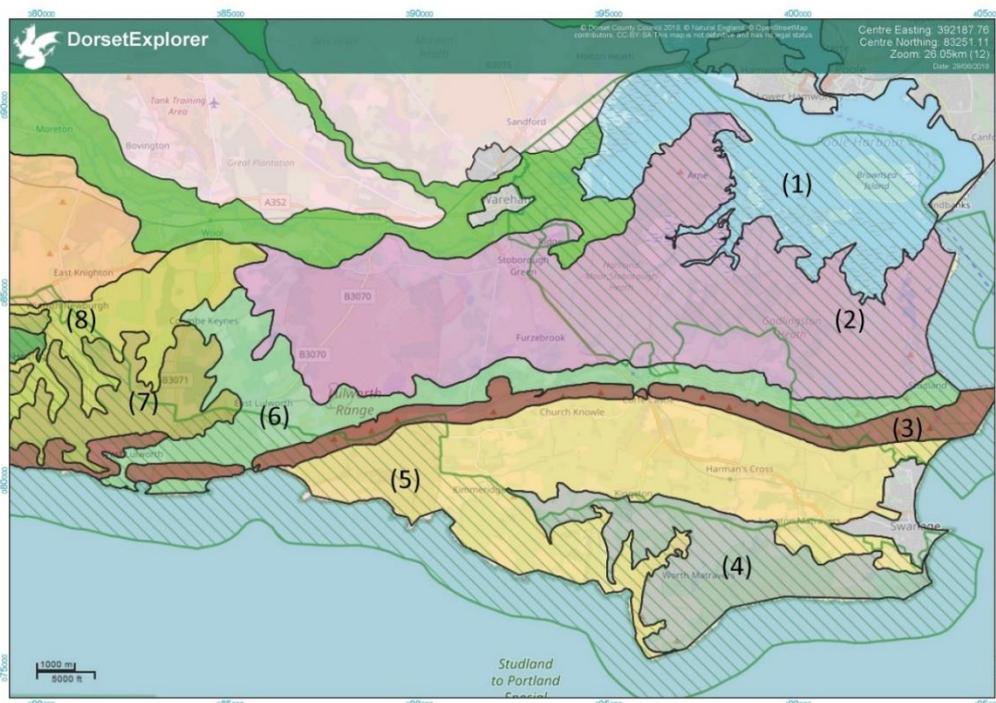
The Purbeck HC is integrated in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs are a family of nationally protected landscapes in the UK that have common qualities like a *dramatic landform and views, rich habitats, a spectacular coastline, mixed farmland, a rich historic and built heritage, tranquility and a sense of remoteness.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harman D 2008. Conserving Character – Landscape character assessment and management guidance for the Dorset AONB.

This is clearly a site of major importance for the conservation of significant evidence of the Earth's history. The Purbeck HC includes an important stretch of World Heritage Site known as the *Jurassic Coast*; this coastline is renowned for offering an unique insight into 188 millions of years of the planet's history. It has world famous deposits of mammal remains and a total of >100 different species of vertebrates identified from fossils. Also noticeable are the Purbeck limestones with numerous dinosaurs tracks and the limestone edge near Lulworth bay with late Jurassic soils and petrified remains of tree stumps.

Humans have helped shape these diverse geological formations and natural processes landforms into distinctive landscapes (Figure 7). These including: the Poole natural harbour, its islands and marginal cliffs and marshes, a vast area of heathlands that covers most of the northern block of the awarded area and the limestone plateau with its species-rich limestone grasslands (Figure 8). Outstanding is the coastal area with some dramatic cliffs and featuring diverse coastal formations like the Lulworth cove, Durdle door and the Stair hole.



**Figure 7** – Major landscape features in the Purbeck HC: (1) Poole harbour and islands, (2) Lowland heaths, (3) Chalk ridge, (4) Limestone plateau, (5) Clay valley, (6) Wooded pastures, (7, 8) Chalk and downland

Although most of the central clay valley is not included in the awarded area this area is also noteworthy. Historically it was subjected to intensive farming practices that have been somewhat alleviated during the last 60 years. It is nevertheless the area where most of the residential, tourist and industrial development have been focused since, weakening the rural character and the condition of this landscape. Poor woodland management has resulted in the degradation or full disappearance of the small woodlands still remaining in the area<sup>2</sup>.

**Conclusion:** The Purbeck HC is not a pristine area but there is no doubt on its importance for the conservation of biological diversity and significant evidence of the Earth's history at a European level. It comprises breeding sites for species protected under the Bern Convention, it harbours several species protected under the Bird and Habitats Directives and it provides resting and feeding areas for several migratory birds. Furthermore, the diverse landscape includes several of the habitats protected by the Habitats Directive. Additionally, and according to previous reports, it is one of the most

<sup>2</sup> Harman D 2008. Conserving Character – Landscape character assessment and management guidance for the Dorset AONB.

important geological and paleontological areas in the UK and represents the European type area for the Kimmeridgian and Portlandian stages of the Upper Jurassic.

The occurrence of invasive species in the area raises some concerns, particularly considering that the populations of two of these species are increasing in the country and that there are some important impacts on coastal and forested environments associated to these species. More information on the status of these (and other) invasive species would be welcome, as well as an evaluation of the need of some measures for controlling their populations.



**Figure 8** – Some examples of landscapes and habitat types present in the area: sand dunes at Stutland (top left), coastal and limestone grasslands at Durlston Country Park and Natural Reserve (top right), salt marshes at Arne peninsula (bottom left) and Lulworth cove (bottom right).

## 2. Conservation measures

### Legal protection status and zoning

The Purbeck HC is fully embedded in the larger Dorset Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs and National Parks have the highest level of landscape protection in England reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>3</sup>. Within the Purbeck HC and classified at the national level we can find several National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Scientific Interest (SSCI) enjoying legal protection, and Sites of National Conservation Interest (SNCI) and Local Geological Sites (check section 5 for further information and detail) enjoying local planning considerations.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

### State of conservation of the main species and their habitats

It was not possible to compile detailed information on the state of conservation of the main species present in the area. During the visit to the Arne Nature Reserve, managed by the RSPB, it was mentioned that the population of species typical from the headlands, namely the nightjar, showed some increase in the past few years. No direct species' conservation measures were observed during the visit, but national level species-recovery projects will surely benefit some of the species occurring in the area. This is the case of the project "Back from the Brink", promoted by Natural England and that focus on 20 nearly extinct species in the UK (see <https://naturebftb.co.uk/>). Locally, measures to biodiversity conservation seem to be mainly implemented at the habitat and landscape level. Good examples of this type of management are the project shifting shores by the National Trust<sup>4</sup>, and the investment made by RSPB in the acquisition of forestry land in Arne, changing its use with the aim to allow heaths to naturally recover and this way increasing the area and connectivity of this habitat, one of the most diverse habitats in the area.

**Conclusion:** The legal regime of protection of the Purbeck HC complies with the EDPA requirements.

The little information collected on the state of conservation of the main species suggests some increase in their population numbers, but further information from monitoring would be welcome. Nevertheless, overall the current management of some protected areas seems to be well focused in preserving or increasing the biological value of the Purbeck HC.

### **3. Management**

#### Management plan for the area

The management of the Purbeck HC is included in the 2014-2019 Management Plan for the larger Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This document is currently under review and a new draft Plan is due to be finished by November 2018. Workshops with local populations are ongoing and a public consultation is planned for the summer. The final document is expected to be approved by local authorities before April 2019.

According to the information provided, the 2014-2019 Management Plan is a good document, and its recommendations are often used and applied by different stakeholders. The new Management Plan is thus expected to follow the same structure and methodology with some updating and adjustments of the contents.

#### Institutional arrangements

The Dorset AONB partnership is responsible for the management of the Purbeck HC. This Partnership was formally established in 2003 and includes several national, regional and local stakeholders, among which are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Dorset County Council, Forestry Commission, Natural England and National Trust.

Other partnerships are sometimes established with more specific goals. Such was the case of the project "Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area" (WP – NIA) that ran from 2012 to 2015 aiming to improve the connectivity and biodiversity of the landscape of Dorset. The Wild Purbeck Partnership comprises Dorset AONB, Dorset County Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team, Kingston Maurward College, Natural England, National Trust and RSPB. Most of these entities own or are otherwise responsible for the management of several sites within the Purbeck HC (Figure 9).

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<sup>4</sup> Shifting shores – more information available at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/shifting-shores-report-2015.pdf](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/shifting-shores-report-2015.pdf)



**Figure 8** – Wall map displayed in the Visitor Centre at Arne, showing the areas owned by conservation charities and NGOs like RSPB, National Trust and Dorset Wildlife Trust within the Purbeck HC (© RSPB)

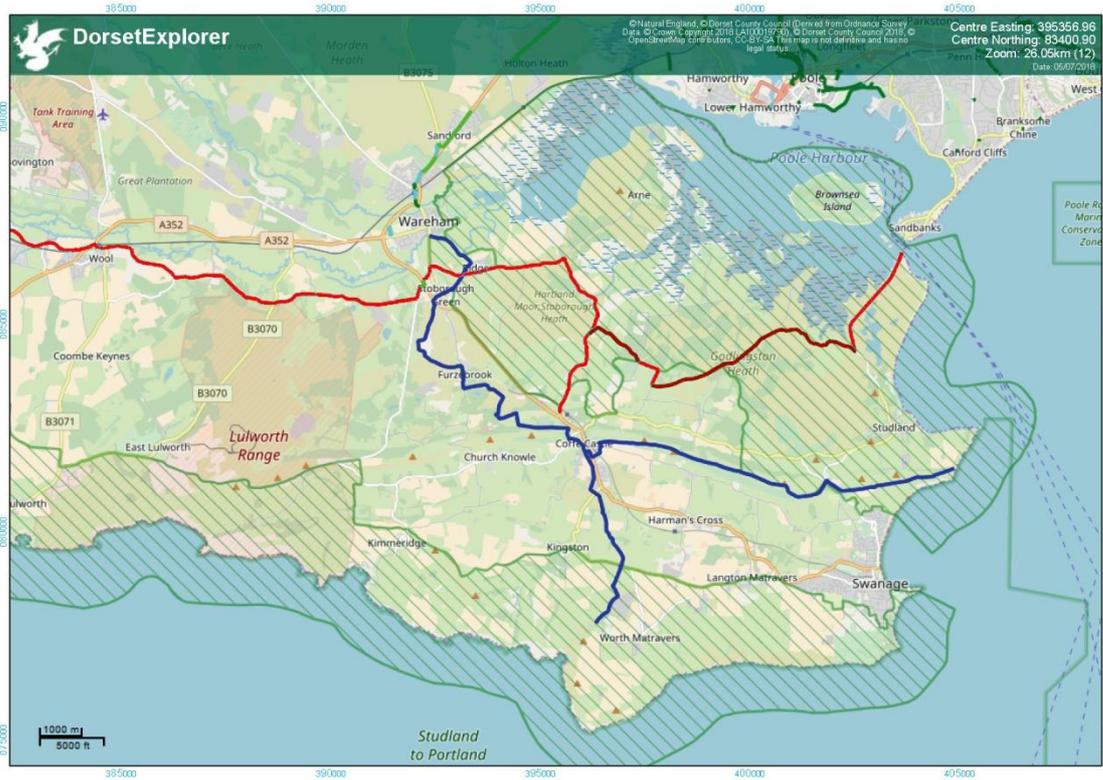
The Dorset AONB has currently 14 people working full time. It is not a large team but it is considered sufficient as they work in close partnership with the Dorset County Council. Additionally, the large number of volunteers, often highly skilled, working with the different partners somehow make up for the number of technicians. Several ranger teams work in the Purbeck HC, depending if the sites are public or privately owned. There are thus ranger teams responsible for the Dorset Council owned sites and public right of way (public paths) and ranger teams more site focused working either on private or NGO owned sites.

Within the Purbeck HC there are several welcoming points and other infrastructures directed to visitors (Figure 9). In a highly touristic area the parking lots become very important and the visitor can find several large areas to park near the major nature reserves and other sites.



**Figure 9** – Some of the welcome and information points available to the Purbeck HC visitors: Arne NR (RSPB, top), Durlston NNR (Dorset CC; bottom left), Stutland Beach (NT, bottom right)

There is a partly off-road hiking or biking route crossing the northern block of the Purbeck HC, which connects with the ferry that crosses the entrance of the Poole harbor to Sandbanks and Bournemouth. Starting from Wareham, the Purbeck Way (<https://www.walkandcycle.co.uk/dorset/Trails/00-49/DORSTR0027.pdf>) also provides hikers and bikers access to some parts of the Purbeck HC (Figure 10). The Swanage railway was closed in the early 70's, but part of it – between Norderm and Swanage – was recovered by volunteers and have been running as a tourist attraction since the 90's. In 2017 a trial diesel service was attempted connecting this line with the national rail in Wareham. The Swanage railway does not cross the Purbeck HC, but if fully functional and allowing bike transport, it could provide an alternative way to reach the area and eventually reducing the increasing number of cars.



**Figure 10** – Hiking and biking trails in the region: The Purbeck way (dark blue) and other on-road and off-road signed cycle routes (respectively light and dark red).

The coastal area also includes part of the very popular Jurassic coast trail (Figure 11).



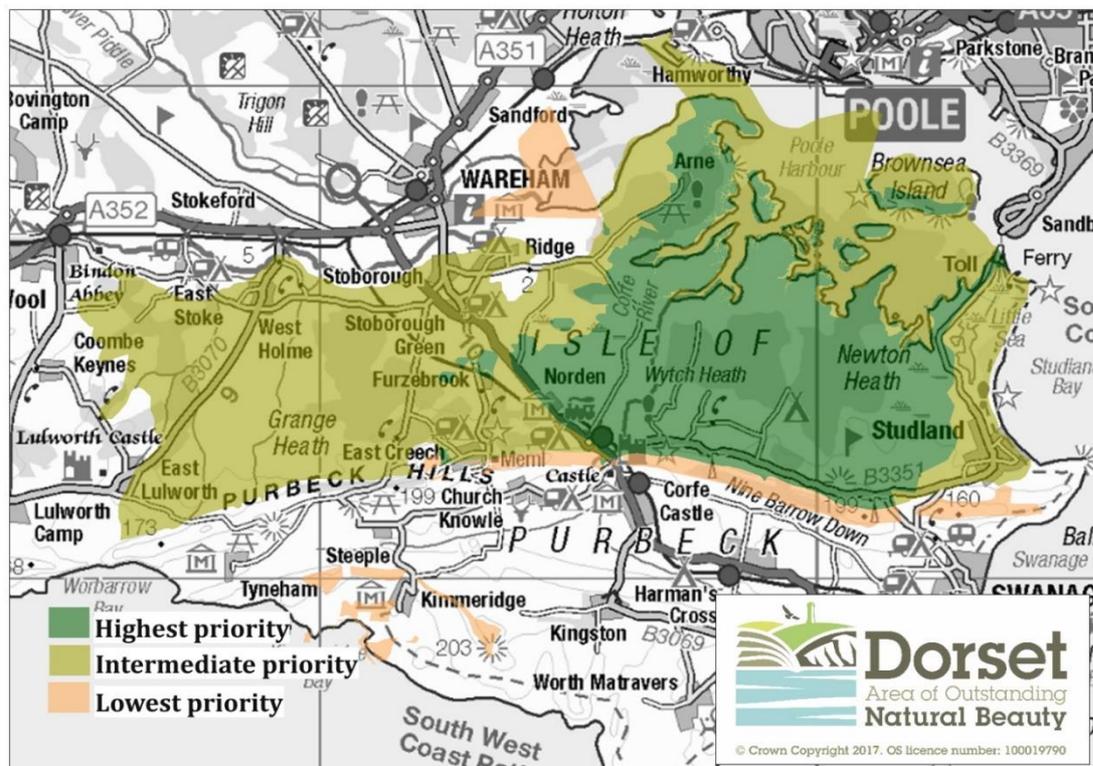
**Figure 11** – Part of the Jurassic Coast trail at Lulworth Cove.

**Financial management**

As mentioned in the annual reports the public finance is a potential risk. Very often the management and conservation actions in the area are project led and consequently with short term goals and not focused in the maintenance of the infrastructures already in place. Projects are mostly funded by the National Lottery and even those are becoming highly competitive due to reduced funding. Overall the results seem to be good and both the Dorset AONB and the County Council seem to be coping, but further budget reductions may limit their activity.

Funds received from the European Union (EU), namely funds from agri-environmental schemes, seem to have been and continue to be vital to ensure an environmentally-friendly management of the landscape. There is thus a reasonable amount of insecurity on how these measures will be kept if or after UK leaves the EU.

Funding opportunities arise now from the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund. According to the Dorset AONB site, this fund was established to enhance the landscape around Wytch Farm Oilfield, mitigating this way the impacts of the oilfield on the local landscape, wildlife and rights of way. In this context, landowners, conservation groups and other can apply for funding projects that strengthen the character of the surrounding landscape by the creation, conservation, enhancement and management of heathland and acid grassland or enhance biodiversity by the conservation, enhancement and management of boundary features (such as hedgerows, veteran trees and earthbanks), woodlands (such as rhododendron control) and rural lanes. As mentioned in the annual reports, the target areas cover a good part of the Purbeck HC (Figure 12).



**Figure 12** – Target areas for funding by the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund

#### Relationship between the body responsible for the area and the other stakeholders

The relationship between both the Dorset AONB and City Council and major NGOs and conservation charities operating in the area seems to be quite good, as it is revealed by the several cycles of conservation partnership. According to the information provided the good relations and positive partnership between all the organizations (>50 in the Dorset AONB Partnership) is one of the strengths of the area.

#### Research and monitoring programmes

The information collected about research and monitoring of biodiversity showed that some monitoring is ongoing in the region:

- Natural England is responsible for the monitoring in Natura 2000 SACs. According with the information provided, this monitoring is not as frequent as it would be appropriate.
- Dorset AONB performs some landscape monitoring, using fixed point photography monitoring. This is however performed in only one site within the Purbeck HC.
- The rangers of Durlston National Nature Reserve (Dorset CC) perform some small-scale monitoring of both fauna and flora within this site.

- RSPB seems to monitor bird population at Arne NR
- Included in the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area (WP-NIA), National Trust has been running a monitoring project at Studland's heaths and dunes called the Cyril Diver Project. During the main project it was possible to train lots of volunteers to re-record Studland's heaths and dunes, following records made by Cyril Diver in the 1930s. The volunteer monitoring effort continues and National Trust is using the (now expert) volunteers to survey different sites across Purbeck and Dorset. More information at [https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/assets/downloads/wild-purbeck/Wild\\_Purbeck\\_NIA\\_2012-2015.pdf](https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/assets/downloads/wild-purbeck/Wild_Purbeck_NIA_2012-2015.pdf) (pp. 27).
- The Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) has a citizen's science project aiming at recording and monitoring wildlife in DWT's Nature Reserves and Dorset's Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). This project includes an online portal – LivingRecord.net – where the volunteers may upload their own data and after validation they can check all verified observations made in the region. Information available at [https://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/recording\\_wildlife.html](https://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/recording_wildlife.html).

According to the information provided all NGOs lodge their records with the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (<http://www.derc.org.uk/general/welcome.htm>) which enables data to be accessed to support management decisions in the region.

#### Natural resources management, including water resource

Water management is ensured through a catchment-based approach. Different catchment partnerships were created, aiming to encourage different stakeholders to work together and coordinate efforts at the catchment scale. The Purbeck HC is within two catchments: most of the northern block is included in the Poole Harbour catchment while the remaining coastal area is covered by the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams. Both Dorset AONB and Dorset CC are partners in the Poole Harbour Partnership and Initiative (PHCI). The PHCI started on 2012 and produced a Catchment Plan aiming to helping coordinate and support projects and actions that may improve the issues in the Poole Harbour catchment. Poole Harbour was considered a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) in 2017. NVZs *are areas of land that drain to polluted waters and which contribute to the pollution of those waters*<sup>5</sup>. The NVZ designation requires farmers within the catchment area to reduce nitrate pollution and to follow a set of mandatory rules, based on Good Agricultural practice.

#### Use of renewable energy systems

Purbeck HC is located in one of the sunniest regions of the UK, benefiting of >1600 hours of sunshine per year, justifying thus some investment in powering some infrastructures with solar panels. Such is the case of some of the buildings at Durlston National Nature Reserve managed by the Dorset CC and the Studland Beach Discovery Centre managed by the National Trust (Figure 13).

According to the information provided during the appraisal visit, small scale renewable energy systems, like small windmills, are also encouraged by Dorset AONB.

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<sup>5</sup> Environment Agency UK. 2016. Datasheet: Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designation 2017 – Eutrophic waters (estuaries and coastal waters). Report for existing Polluted Water - Poole Harbour



*Figure 13 – The use of solar power at the Purbeck Heritage Coast: Durlston National Nature Reserve (left) and Studland Beach Discovery Centre (right).*

**Conclusion:** The management of the Purbeck HC is supported by a large number of organizations and is thus based on partnerships. This seems a very good strategy for an area with such a diverse site typology and conservation status. It is nevertheless fundamental that the good relations between the Dorset AONB and Nature Conservation organizations operating in the area are kept.

There is no Management Plan specific to the awarded EDPA area but the Dorset AONB Management Plan has a solid set of objectives and management policies focusing biodiversity protection and restoration. The new Management Plan, due in 2019, should keep or even strengthen these policies. It should also further promote the monitoring of the main species and habitats in the area and encourage the partners to coordinate efforts and produce good quality data at the regional level.

#### 4. Uses and socio-economic activities

As it was mentioned before, The Purbeck HC is “an inhabited area with a number of small villages and a wide range of economic activities including agriculture, forestry, quarrying, oil production and tourism. Within the area certain sites have been set aside specifically for nature conservation and informal recreation”.

Within the Purbeck HC we can find a large set of socio-economic activities, most of them potentially conflicting with the preservation of the natural values present in the area.

- Forestry – one large tract of commercial forest of non-native trees remains on the heathland. This area is managed by the Forestry Commission and it has been subject to a significant reduction in the past decade. Some efforts are being made to restore this area to more open heathland.
- Agriculture – historically one of the most impactful activities in the area; nevertheless agri-environmental investment allowed to increasing the focus in conservation. However, and as mentioned before (see Section 3 – Financial management) the future availability of agri-environment funding is critical, particularly in the areas not covered by SSSI designation. The Parliament shows good principles for public investment in the recently presented Agriculture Bill, but there is a concern about how much money will be made available by Treasury if it is no longer a requirement of the EU. Previous concerns about intensive agriculture near the coast seem now to be relaxed as the majority of the area is now covered by grassland.
- Grazing – seems not to be a major problem in the awarded area. Cattle are in fact used to control vegetation when recovering heathlands. However, there seems to be some risk of

under grazing, particularly on the Purbeck Ridge and coast, where the dominance of *Brachypodium pinnatum/rupestre* which colonises the calcareous grassland compromising other more delicate species.

- Quarrying and mining – traditional quarrying of stone for housing seems not to be too impactful and allow for habitat and landscape recovery. There is however a recent draft Mineral Sites Plan prepared by the Dorset CC that describes the potential extension of the Swanworth Quarry, an already large quarry located within the Purbeck HC. As mentioned in the annual reports the AONB advises against the extension of this quarry as it would impair the character of the Heritage Coast.

The Wytch Farm, Europe's largest onshore oilfield, operated by Perenco since 2011 (Figure 14) is located at the northern block of the Purbeck HC. The potential impacts of oilfields over human population, ecosystems and environment in general (e.g. air and water pollution) are well known and for that reason oil exploitation in the area is associated with a set of mitigation and compensation measures that should be kept.

- Tourism / leisure activities – The beauty and the good weather of this region makes it a preferential target both for national and international tourists. Tourism can be seen as an opportunity as it will help funding conservation in the area but great care should be placed in visitor management as increasing use levels can negatively impact the quality of recreational experience as well as natural resources.
- Buildings and infrastructures – also as an outcome of the large number of tourists there is a clear pressure resulting from the expansion of the large settlements bordering the Purbeck HC.
- Car traffic and public access – as mentioned before, public transportation is poor in this region making both locals and particularly visitors highly dependent on cars. One of the primary problems resulting of the large volume of cars is the availability of parking area, particularly near highly visited places.



*Figure 14 – One of the oil wells of the Wytch Farm, partly hidden by a curtain of pine trees.*

**Conclusion:** Some of the uses and socio-economic activities within the Purbeck HC seem to be potentially or effectively damaging the physical, natural, biological integrity as well as the cultural values of the protected area. It is thus very important to closely monitor these activities enabling a timely intervention, if needed. Particularly attention should be placed to the extraction activities – quarrying and oil – but also to tourism.

Promoting and improving public transportation in the area and alternative ways to access the most visited sites should be a priority.

## 5. Connectivity of the area

### Ecological connectivity with other areas

There is clearly some lack ecological connectivity at the Purbeck HC, at different levels. Some efforts were made to mitigate the ecological isolation of some sites, particularly in the northern block. The past and current acquisition of forestry lands and its progressive conversion to heathlands is increasing the continuum of natural habitats in this area (see Wild Purbeck NIA in Section 3). The Wytch farm fund may come as a good opportunity to recover natural habitats and restore connectivity.

The ecological connectivity between the two blocks – heathlands and coast – also seems to be very poor. Historically, the Corfe valley that separates these two blocks, was subject to intensive arable agricultural practices and very poor woodland and hedges management. Nowadays agriculture seems to be more diverse, but this valley is now the core of the residential, tourism and industrial development of the region. It is also in this valley that the major roads are located. The Corfe valley is not part of the Purbeck HC but it is included in the Dorset AONB and this can in fact be very advantageous. Challenging as the task of increasing ecological connectivity in this area may be, the landscape management plan for this AONB<sup>6</sup> includes several management guidelines that if implemented will be highly beneficial for the conservation of biodiversity and ecological connectivity at the Purbeck HC. This seems in fact to be a well studied issue in Dorset where ecological connectivity and potential connectivity maps were already produced by Dorset Local Nature Partnership (DLNP), working with Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC), and with support from the DLNP partners, particularly Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Dorset County Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Natural England ([https://www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/ecological\\_networks.html](https://www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/ecological_networks.html)). These maps identify target areas that will be the focus of future projects of habitat restoration or recovery.

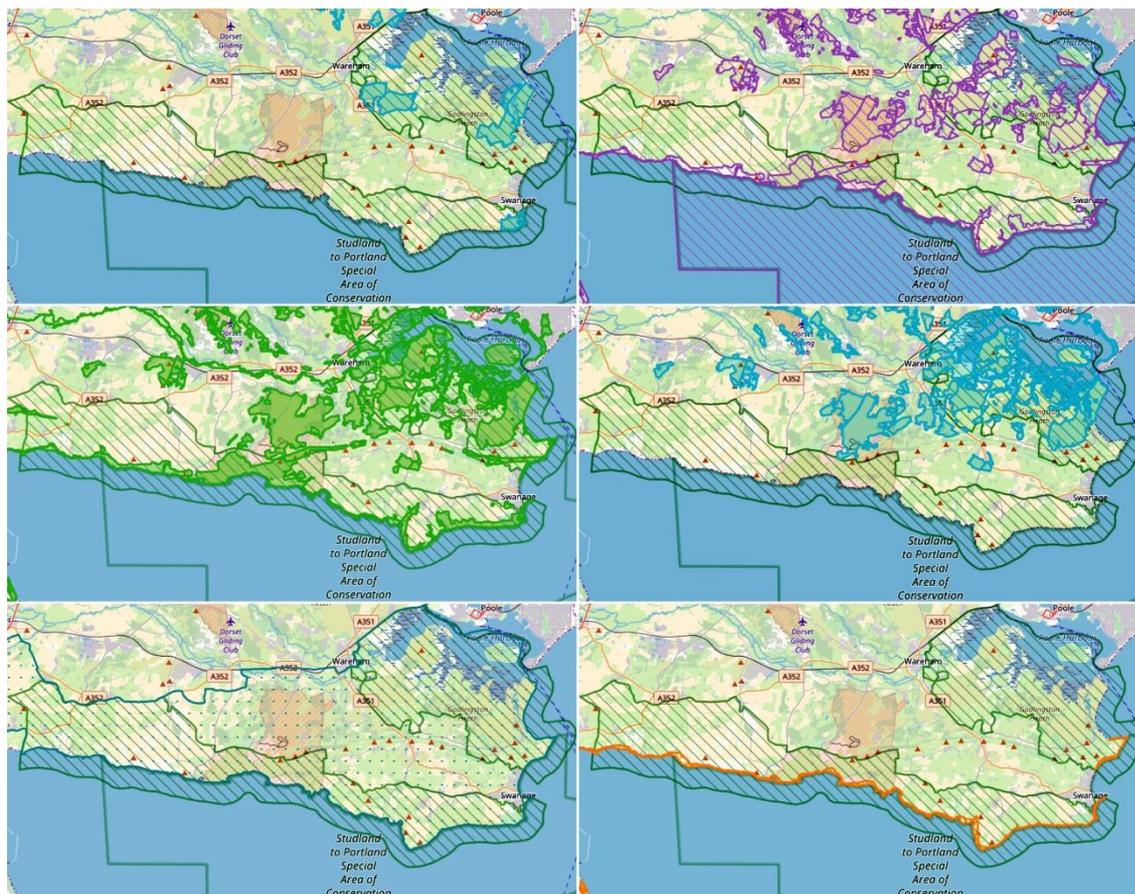
### Other forms of recognition awarded to the area or certification of protected areas.

The importance of the Purbeck HC is well reflected through the number of nature conservation and other national and international designations (Figure 9). The Purbeck HC is fully embedded in the larger Dorset Area Of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB). Within the Purbeck HC and classified at the national level we can find several National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Scientific Interest (SSCI), Sites of National Conservation Interest (SNCI) and Local Geological Sites. Among the international designations we can find several Natura 2000 sites, both Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA, Figure 4), Ramsar wetlands and the World Heritage site that includes most of the area's coastline.

**Conclusion:** The poor ecological connectivity is one important issue in the Purbeck HC and although recognising the merit of the successful recovery of large areas of heathlands, further efforts are necessary to reduce the barrier effect created by the intensive human land use in Corfe valley.

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<sup>6</sup> Harman D 2008. Conserving Character – Landscape character assessment and management guidance for the Dorset AONB.



**Figure 9** – Some of the nature conservation and other national and international designations in the Purbeck HC (green striped). National (left): National Nature Reserves (top), Sites of Scientific Interest (middle) and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. International (right): Special Areas of Conservation (top), Ramsar sites (middle) and World Heritage Site (bottom). Data from DorsetExplorer (<https://explorer.geowessex.com>).

## 6. Implementation of the conditions and recommendations

### Conditions:

- i. The terms of the agreement between Dorset County Council and British Petroleum (BP) are being strictly adhered to, and BP should continue to work to the highest standards

As mentioned in the annual reports the Wytch Farm oilfield is currently operated by Perenco (since 2013). A new agreement was prepared, ensuring (a) safety in operation and controls to ensure human and environment health; (b) environmental management of areas in the estate in direct control of Perenco; (c) the already mentioned Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund, and (d) the effective decommissioning and site restoration once the operation has ceased.

The new agreement was finished in 2017 and some of the terms are already being implemented namely the Wytch Farm Fund and habitat recovery of open habitat.

- ii. The extension of existing quarries or the opening of new quarries must 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: (a) their scale and length; (b) their negative impact on the landscape, wildlife and the enjoyment of the area by the public or local communities; (c) the practical impossibility of achieving satisfactory restoration and aftercare within a period of five years following the cessation of work

This is an issue that still brings some concern in the management of the heritage Coast. As mentioned before there is a recent draft Mineral Sites Plan prepared by the Dorset CC that describes the potential extension of the Swanworth Quarry, an already large quarry located within the Purbeck

HC. As mentioned in the annual reports the AONB advises against the extension of this quarry as it would impair the character of the Heritage Coast. It seems however that the issue is being closely accompanied by the AONB. An intervention of the CoE should be considered if deemed necessary.

Recommendations:

- i. Work should continue on the inventory of natural areas calling for more adequate protection, as should research on these sites, particularly in the marine reserves, where the periodic inventories of fauna and flora should be continued*

As mentioned above some work has been made towards this goal. Research seems however to be residual and monitoring is often project or entity led. It is thus important to keep working to increasing the research, inventory and monitoring of the Purbeck HC.

- ii. Any progress to reduce intensive arable use on the immediate edge of the cliffs would be welcome*

Previous concerns about intensive agriculture near the coast seem now to be relaxed as the majority of the area is now covered by grassland. There are some few exceptions in some areas arable areas but these are currently using extensive farming practices.

- iii. Work should continue to restore eroded paths, in particular through finding innovative solutions such as those used at Lulworth Cove*

According to the information provided, the restoration of eroded paths is tackled in a case by case approach. Not often is necessary to implement such a costly solution as the one in Lulworth Cove (see Figure 11).

- iv. Efforts to promote the use of more sustainable methods of transport by visitors (bus, train, bicycle, walking and riding) should be increased*

Some efforts have been made to increasing alternatives to car transport within the Purbeck HC. As mentioned before some cycling and trekking trails were created or improved. The full recovery of the train line may also greatly improve sustainable accessibility to the area. Some work remains however, as the bus system is highly deteriorated (due to National transport policies), the suggestion boat access had no adherence and the increasing necessity of car parking space is quite obvious.

- v. Measures should continue to be taken to address risks of oil, chemical and other pollution from shipping and marine waste in general*

According with the information provided, the measures taken and the current policies make the risk of oil spilling from the oil farm very low. Onshore oil transfer is considered a safe procedure. Offshore risks are integrated by the National Contingency Plan (NCP) that makes a strategic overview for responses to marine pollution from shipping and offshore installations, and are thus outside the AONB Partnership responsibilities.

Litter free Dorset, a partnership made up of local organizations, charities and community groups, promotes regular campaigns to control litter often in areas of the Purbeck HC, coastal and marine areas included.

- vi. New resources should be made available to ensure the integrity in perpetuity of the newly designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and its effective presentation to the public*

The World Heritage Site has been subject to a reasonable amount of investment that is reflected in the interpretation sites and education campaigns. The Site is managed by a NGO – Jurassic Coast Trust - since 2017, potentiating an increased flexibility in work and revenues.

- vii. The Heritage Landscape Management Plan for the Lulworth Estate should be implemented;*

This seems to be currently a point of no particular concern. The management plan that covers a 20-year period, is currently being implemented by Historic England.

viii. *Co-operation and the establishment of partnerships in management planning, action and exchange of information between all major bodies involved with conservation and management should continue as it is the key method for future management of the coast*

As mentioned before the relationship between both the Dorset AONB and City Council and major NGOs and conservation charities operating in the area seems to be quite good, as it is revealed by the several cycles of conservation partnership. According to the information provided the good relations and positive partnership between all the organizations (>50 in the Dorset AONB Partnership) is one of the strengths of the area.

**Conclusion:** The conditions and recommendations from the last Resolution (Resolution CM/ResDip(2009)10) adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 October 2009 have been taken into account and mostly resolved by the Management body and by other stakeholders.

## 7. Conclusions and remarks

Taken in consideration all that was observed and discussed during the appraisal visit it is recommended the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Purbeck Heritage Coast until 20 June 2029, under the following conditions and recommendations:

### Conditions:

1. Ensure that the terms of the agreement made with Perenco are being strictly adhered to and the Perenco continues to work to the highest standards.
2. The extension of existing quarries or the opening of new quarries must 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: (a) their scale and length; (b) their negative impact on the landscape, wildlife and the enjoyment of the area by the public or local communities; (c) the practical impossibility of achieving satisfactory restoration and aftercare within a period of five years following the cessation of work

### Recommendations:

1. Secure appropriate funding incentives for continuing environment-friendly management of the landscape.
2. Promote and improve public transportation and other more sustainable methods of transport, particularly near the most visited sites.
3. Monitor the number of the visitors in order to determine its impact on the environment. A visitor management strategy should be prepared for the areas with the larger number of visitors in order to avoid any negative impact either in the quality of recreational experience as well as in the natural resources of the Purbeck HC.
4. Further investments should be made towards the improvement of the habitat and landscape connectivity within the Purbeck HC.
5. Promote the monitoring of the main species and habitats in the area and encourage the partners to coordinate efforts and produce good quality data for all the Diploma area.
6. Initiate studies focusing on the biological control of invasive alien species occurring in the Purbeck HC, particularly the Canada goose and the sika deer, and if deemed necessary, prepare a strategic plan for their control.

## ANNEX I

### **Draft agenda for visit to assess the European Diploma for the Purbeck Heritage Coast**

A panel will be visiting Purbeck on 4th and 5th June to carry out a ten year appraisal of the Purbeck Heritage Coast. Based on the areas of interest identified in the last visit, a suggested agenda is as follows:

Suggested start time of 9.30 from Wareham each day, finishing around 5 pm.

#### **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June**

Durlston: Start with an introduction to the area at the Learning Centre, including the Purbeck Heritage Coast and Dorset AONB / other relevant designations (Tom). Walk round the park to look at grassland management (with Ali or Katie from Durlston and representative from NE who could talk about the extent of HLS / CS management along the coastal headlands and field margins). Finish at the Castle visitor centre.

Lunch at Durlston (table booked for 12.15), then travel to

Lulworth: meet with Maddy and Sally at 2pm. See the new access around Stair Hole in conjunction with heritage mobility, so people with limited mobility can access the route. Sally – WHS management plan, access improvements planned for the fossil forest. Use classroom upstairs for discussion / presentations. Maybe walk along path by Stair Hole down to cove (the building right on the cove has been removed in the last 10 years)

#### **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> June**

Arne: am. Start at the tearoom for background information prior to going out on site. Update from RSPB about HLF grants for the saline lagoon and Hyde's Heath, plus the large grazing unit. Meet with Ade to talk about Perenco and Wytch Farm Fund. Walk to Shipstal viewpoint to see the management of the site and look across to Poole Harbour and Brownsea Island. Led by Peter Robertson from RSPB.

Lunch: Arne café, then travel to

Studland: to see the shifting shores approach to coastal management by the National Trust. The Discovery Centre has been booked so it can be used as a base to talk about Wild Purbeck and NT approach to quarrying (David Brown will cover this). A NT representative will also be available to talk about coastal change issues at Studland.

Visit Studland Beach to look at some of the management issues. Finish at the Discovery Centre for a final session with Ana and to give her the opportunity to ask any further questions.

Stop in to Norden on way back to talk about car park improvements planned under CCF fund, and proposals being developed for cycle routes through the Wytch Farm Access and Enhancement Fund.

Back to Wareham station for travel onwards.

#### **Hosts / attendees:**

Durlston: Katie Black (Dorset County Council), Natural England representative (tbc)

Lulworth: Maddy Pfaff (Lulworth Estate), Sally King (Dorset AONB, World Heritage Team)

Arne: Peter Robertson (RSPB), Ade Parvin (Perenco)

Studland: David Brown (National Trust), Tony Flux (NT Coastal and marine specialist for SW)