

Partners agree 20-year vision for Purbeck Heaths super NNR

The Purbeck Heaths NNR is a product of long-term collaboration for nature recovery. The partners, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Forestry England, National Trust, Natural England, Rempstone Estate, and the RSPB have now agreed a 20-year vision, a Memorandum of Understanding and the first ever joint management plan for a 'super' NNR.

The management plan will allow the partnership to work at a large landscape scale and use natural processes and animals to sustain this dynamic and ever-shifting kaleidoscope of habitats – a wild quality long missing from much of the British countryside, but vitally important to its wildlife.

Already, the partners are moving forward these ambitions for nature and people. The area grazed by cattle and ponies is being more than doubled in size, encompassing 1,370 hectares and stretching to RSPB Arne. Led by the Dorset AONB team, with grant support from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and the Wytch Farm Landscape and Access Fund, new fencing and cattle grids are being installed, allowing for the introduction of rare breed pigs alongside the cattle and ponies, rooting the landscape for the first time since the extinction of wild boar some 300 years past.

Rachel Williams, Natural England Area Manager, said:

This is a fantastic example of partners working together to make nature recovery a reality. Purbeck Heaths NNR is an inspirational place for people from all walks of life to enjoy the natural world. By giving wildlife space to thrive and restoring natural processes across the landscape, we can reverse the decline in nature.

Douglas Ryder of the Rempstone Estate said:

We are delighted to be working to help deliver a landscape that gives space for nature, working together to appropriately manage Purbeck Heaths using tried and tested agricultural methods, such as grazing with native cattle, to enhance habitat and species recovery is hugely important.

David Brown, National Trust Landscape Partnerships Manager, said:

The Purbeck Heaths NNR is the latest milestone on the journey to recover nature across Purbeck. Conservationists have been working here since the 1950s and have helped safeguard some of Europe's most precious heathland sites, gradually reconnecting them back

into one huge nature-rich landscape. The NNR has brought together 7 landowners under this common vision.

Leanne Sargeant, Forestry England Senior Ecologist, said:

This strengthens our ambitions to do more for biodiversity and our new 5-year plan will feed into improving our forests for wildlife. We recognise the importance of working at a landscape-scale and this partnership will really help us utilise our knowledge to build a better landscape for nature.

Dr Phil Sterling, Dorset AONB Chairman, said:

Functioning ecosystems and abundant wildlife are the cornerstones of natural beauty, and the scale at which the Purbeck Heaths NNR partners are working makes such a contribution to the nationally-important landscape of the Dorset AONB.

By working together, partners benefit from each other's strengths and expertise to recover nature and restore natural processes across Purbeck Heaths NNR. In doing so, it will become more resilient to climate change, creating a wilder, richer, and more complete experience for people enjoying the reserve.

In the years to come, the Purbeck Heaths NNR will continue to be a beating heart of nature conservation, supporting nature recovery beyond its boundaries and into the wider landscape to strengthen the emergent national Nature Recovery Network.

Notes to editors

- Declared on 21 February 2020, the Purbeck Heaths NNR covers 3,331 hectares (8,231 acres), including Studland and the Arne peninsula, and is the first 'super' NNR in the country, combining a number of existing nature reserves. Nestled in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is now the largest area of lowland heath managed as a single nature reserve in all of England.
- Visit www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/wild-purbeck, and www.nationaltrust.org.uk/studland-bay for more information.
- Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. Established in 2006, our work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public.
- Learn more about [Landscapes for Life Week](#).