



Urban Heaths Partnership Heathland Mitigation Delivery Report April 2020 – March 2021



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

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1.0 Introduction

The Local Planning Authorities continue to take a partnership approach to heathland mitigation. The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020 -2025 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was prepared and adopted jointly between BCP and Dorset Councils with advice from Natural England. Further information regarding the SPD is available on the Dorset Council website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk link direct to SPD: [Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework - Dorset Council](#)

Since 2014 the Urban Heaths Partnership (UHP) has delivered heathland mitigation on behalf of partner organisations under this and previous SPDs. Currently 10 partner organisations make up the partnership as below:

- ◆ Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
- ◆ Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council
- ◆ Dorset Council
- ◆ Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
- ◆ Dorset Police
- ◆ Dorset Wildlife Trust
- ◆ Natural England
- ◆ National Trust
- ◆ Forestry England
- ◆ Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

While reporting on delivery during 2020/21 this report also provides figures and evidence in relation to delivery since 2014.

During the 12-month period covered by this report the Covid pandemic meant that England was placed under lock down rules over two time periods lasting a total of 8 months. This had a profound effect on heathland mitigation delivery as it did on everyday life for many people. This report reflects on the change in delivery techniques employed to allow continuation in what turned out to be a very busy time for all open space sites and the effort to support partners some of whom had limited people on sites due to furloughed staff.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Heathland SPD

Under the SPD the Local Planning Authorities collect developer contributions from development within 5kms of heathland sites. These contributions are used to fund heathland mitigation in the form of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and Heathland Infrastructure Projects (HIPs) which include development of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).

The UHP team of core staff is responsible for co-ordinating and delivering elements of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). This team continues to be employed by Dorset Council on behalf of the UHP – see Appendix 1, page 28 for team structure in place March 2021.

The wardening element of SAMM is delivered and funded by the Local Planning Authorities along with HIPs and SANGs.

This report concentrates on the SAMM elements of heathland mitigation delivered by the UHP Core Team.

2.2 Structure and governance of UHP

The current working and reporting mechanism for UHP is as follows:

- **Heathland Mitigation Steering Group** - this Group has the key role of overseeing the delivery of Heathland Mitigation in Dorset, this includes:
 - Understanding and complying with current legal and planning policy related to heathland mitigation.
 - Establishing policies and practices to enable partner organisations to successfully sustain lowland heath habitat in the face of development pressure.
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of policy, practice, implementation measures and monitoring of heathland mitigation.
 - Suggesting improvement and changes to ensure that mitigation remains both current and effective.
 - Having oversight of a work programme for the UHP Team and the UHP Implementation Group.
 - Advising and identifying projects to deliver heathland mitigation.
- **UHP Implementation Group** - This Group Co-ordinates and oversees delivery of an agreed work programme for the mitigation required under the SPD for Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM), this includes:
 - Monitoring delivery of mitigation to better understand effectiveness.
 - Applying appropriate new technology to ensure that measuring and monitoring remain current.
 - Identifying supplementary funding opportunities to link with this work.
 - Implementing improvements and changes as recommended by the Heathland Mitigation Steering Group.
 - Researching and suggesting best practice to enable mitigation measures to deliver continuous improvement to partners.
 - Supporting Planning Departments by providing technical information relating to the SPD as required at Local Plan examinations, planning enquiries etc.
 - Ensuring that staff and financial resources are deployed effectively to deliver appropriate mitigation in line with strategic objectives.
 - Suggesting new projects

- **UHP Staff Management** - The core team is managed within the Environment and Wellbeing Places Services at Dorset Council with line management provided by the Environment Advice Team Manager. The twelve members of staff are led by the UHP Team Manager. During covid-19 weekly on-line team catch ups were held, with wider team meetings held every 6 weeks including the wardens employed by Local Authorities to maintain consistent approach and understanding of delivery and issues across the whole area.

2.3 Agreements Plans and Strategy

The UHP works to a framework of formal plans, strategies and service level agreements:

- **The UHP Heathland and Mitigation Strategy** - The UHP Heathland Mitigation Strategy was written by the UHP Team Manager in consultation with the Implementation Group and adopted by the Group.
- **UHP Annual Delivery Business Plan** - The UHP Business plan sets out delivery of the strategy and provides the delivery framework for the core team. Progress against the plan is monitored by the UHP Team Manager and reported to the Implementation Group
- **SAMM Wardening Service Level Agreement** - A Service Level Agreement is in place agreed by LPA partners covering delivery of the wardening element of SAMM delivered by themselves.

2.4 Area

The area that is covered by direct UHP mitigation support is over 2500 ha, however much of the education, engagement and project work provides consistent messages for a much wider area of heathland. Figure 1 gives an approximate percentage split of this heathland area between the current Local Authority Areas. Please note that this only includes areas/sites where UHP provide direct mitigation support.

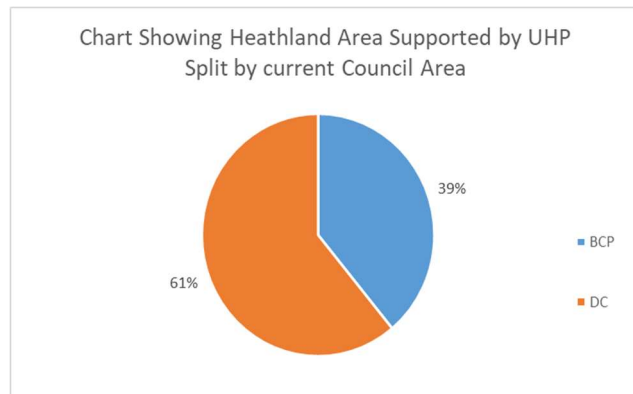


Figure 1 Chart showing heathland area by Local Authority areas

2.5 Work areas of UHP

There are five main strands to the work of the UHP Core Team and they are discussed in detail in sections 3 – 7:

- Co-ordination and management of UHP
- Education and engagement
- Monitoring
- Dorset Dogs Project
- Firewise

3.0 Co-ordination, management and core engagement of UHP

3.1 Context and Aims of UHP Co-ordination, management and core engagement

Key elements of coordination, management and core engagement of the UHP are:

- Develop and monitor the implementation of the UHP Delivery Plan in line with the UHP Heathland Mitigation Strategy.
- Co-ordinate the UHP team delivery of SAMM elements in line with the approved budget. Appendix 1 shows the Core Team structure March 2021
- Support co-ordination of the wardening element of SAMM across the area on all heathland sites.
- Monitor delivery of SAMM and report annually.
- Develop and deliver key messages through a range of media
- Develop the Dorset heaths website working with the UHP team and partners

3.2 Results of 2020/21 Co-ordination and management

During the 2020/21 financial year key work has included:

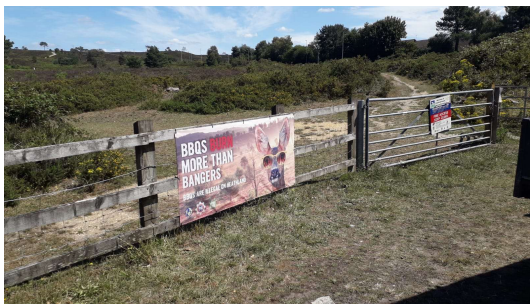
- Development of a brief and commissioning of work by Footprint Ecology in conjunction with planning policy officers analysing heathland monitoring data to provide recommendations for future mitigation needs linked to the BCP and DC Local plans and review of heathland mitigation delivery.
- Production and monitoring of the UHP Delivery plan -agreed by Implementation Group, progress has been monitored and delivery throughout the year has been on track with this.
- Two Implementation Group meetings facilitated progress on delivery and budget reported at these.
- Eight Team meetings facilitated, attended by Core Team and wider mitigation staff maintaining area wide knowledge across all staff.
- Production of the UHP Annual Report for Financial year 2019/20 produced August 2020.
- Overseen the delivery of Poole Harbour Recreation Mitigation (October 2020) with recruitment of the Recreation Mitigation Co-ordinator and Seasonal Mitigation Warden.
- Support DWFRS and Forestry England in the coordination during and after the to the Wareham Forest fire. UHP team members spent time on the site supporting Forestry England with necessary activities such as damping down and search for surviving reptiles, hot-strike packs delivered to the local community and obtaining films, photographs, interviews and data from the site.



- Implementing realignment of team structure as agreed in previous financial year including recruiting Education Assistant and Project Support Officer.
- Change in delivery due to covid-19, managing homeworking and supporting staff through pandemic and ever-changing circumstances.
- Recruitment of the new Dorset Dogs Officer
- Facilitation of Operation Heathland meetings online.
- Facilitation of Heathland Mitigation Visitor Management Workshop in March 2021 discussing issues around increased visitor numbers and actions to help with this.
- Development and delivery of the #Operation Heathland 2021 campaign to share consistent messages via social media.
- Two Heathland Life Newsletters written and distributed to Councillors and Partners detailing the work of the UHP team.

3.3 Results of 2020/21 core engagement

- **BBQ Campaign**



For the 2021 BBQ campaign the UHP team were part of the delivery of the large joint BBQ campaign. Focussing on heathlands the team were proactive with local businesses that stocked disposable BBQs near heathland sites providing key messaging in the form of posters and fliers as well as engagement with them.

54 banners and many posters were also put up on a range of high-risk sites.

37 shops contacted and offered posters and leaflets, with almost 80% take up of information.

54 caravan and campsites visited and provided posters and leaflets.

Social media - Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms were used. **46 posts** were posted under the BBQ campaign title with **30,040 reach** and **1,488 engagements**.

- **Heath Educators Forum**

A Health Education Forum was created to develop links, share good practice in the new covid-19 landscape, discuss resource development and sharing. Building links with our wider partners such as Thames Basin Heaths and Devon Pebble Bed Heaths

- **Heath Week**

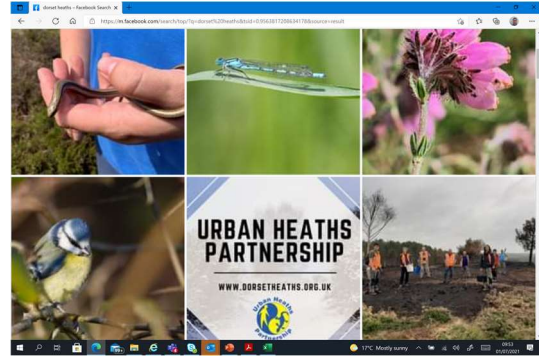
Work in early 2021 in preparation for delivery in July 2021. The Education Co-ordinator and Project Support Officer led for UHP in putting together and promoting events and activities for the week to be delivered 24th – 30th July 2021.

- **Upton Country Park**

Working collaboration with the heritage project at Upton Country Park in developing 'roots and shoots' with SMILE Lone Parent Families community group events and other pop up events to be delivered in summer 2021.

- **Engagement through website and social media**

Social Media channels have been developed alongside the existing website to promote and disseminate the UHP messages under the Dorset Heaths name. The employment of a Project Support Officer during this year has meant that time has been invested in building these platforms and are now important for reaching a much wider audience. UHP have a Dorset Heaths Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms.



Articles and posts provided by the team include:

- Posts for science week
- Articles for Great British Bird Watch and resources for Facebook and Instagram
- Instagram videos for target school use

Analytics:

Facebook: **132,441** total post reach, **13,164** total post engagements

Instagram: **529** Followers

Twitter: Total Impressions **136,506**, total engagements **5,391**

4.0 Education – Schools programme

4.1 Context and Aims of UHP Education

The Education programme was delivered by the Education Coordinator and Education Assistant. The Education Co-ordinator also oversees the Dorset Dogs and Firewise projects.

The aims of UHP Education are:

- Deliver a co-ordinated approach to education across the Partnership.
- Identify and contact Target Schools offering heathland related activities tailored to age and subject.
- Increase awareness of the importance of heathlands for their wildlife and biodiversity.
- Increase awareness of the consequences of heathland fires to the wildlife and the community along with other potentially damaging or antisocial activities.
- Encourage individual and community responsibility for the protection of heathlands for the future and provide a sense of ownership.

Target Schools have been agreed with partners as those to offer UHP education activities to as a priority. These are chosen mainly due to proximity to a heathland site and remained unchanged during this time period. See Appendix 2 for the 2020/21 target school list.

Covid 19

While the context and aims of the programme remain the same, delivery of these have adapted in response to the covid-19 pandemic such as delivery of on-line resources and use of digital engagement. In school delivery was not possible for much of this financial year and this had a great effect upon education targets for in school delivery.

The ever-changing situation with covid-19 meant that a large percentage of time was spent being reactive to the situation and adapting to produce possible delivery options and resources. During Spring members of the team took part in video filming and editing training to help develop their skills and produce higher quality online resources. Audio/video equipment was also purchased for the team to use.

All school visits stopped between April -July 2020 either due to government guidance or school policy. The priority was to continue to engage with schools and to support home and school learning within the constraints of on-line delivery. Regular contact was made with the target Primary schools during this time period to continue to promote the work of UHP, encourage the inclusion of heathland education within the curriculum planning and to offer support to teachers searching for relevant online resources.

Bookings were taken throughout the year and then subsequently cancelled as both UHP education and schools attempted to continue the engagement. During the summer term of 2020 bookings were taken for onsite education but these had to be cancelled in response to covid-19 cases rising. In the Autumn term library sessions were booked as well as GCSE and KS1 and 2 lessons and then cancelled. Where possible resources were supplied as an alternative. A programme of arson courtroom drama lessons was booked in for the secondary schools which again had to be cancelled due to another lock down in January 2021.

4.2 Results of 2020/21 Education – schools programme

A range of online resources were developed during the year. They included:

- **Education Activity resource development** - Rapid development of the education learning resources on the Dorset Heaths website. The material was developed so that it met the government restrictions in place at the time e.g. limited to once a day walk and those with limited access to the outdoors and resources or self-isolating. The focus was on nature-based activities and crafts for KS 1 and 2. As well as fact files about endangered species. 26 activities were produced - [Learning Resources | Urban Heaths Partnership | Dorset \(dorsetheaths.org.uk\)](#).
- **Interactive virtual Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) activity** -developed, for Key stage 3 students, to educate about the dangers of Heathland fires to people and wildlife and test the skills and intuition of young people. The activity includes real footage from Dorset Police and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, re-enacted forensic testing, aerial photographs, interviews from suspects

and witnesses and evidence to study. Available on the Dorset Heaths website to supplement the Arson Courtroom Drama (ACD) activity.

Presentations, lectures and videos

- A virtual lecture delivered to Kingston Maurward Countryside Management students (**22 students**).
- A virtual presentation was given to Corfe Hills School on UHP work (reaching **1000** students)
- A 'heathland adventure' video for EYFS and KS1 students posted by the library's services on their youtube channel (**60 views**).
- Complimentary craft activities and a filming of the story Sam's Sad Day (**30 views**)
- Three short videos focusing on the history of the heaths, the dry heath and the wet heath (**575 views**)

5.0 Dorset Dogs Project

5.1 Context and aims of Dorset Dogs

The Dorset Dogs project is delivered by a Dorset Dogs Officer and Dorset Dogs Assistant (30 hours per week). During this year the Dorset Dogs Officer retired, there was a gap of 2 months before a new Officer was in post.

The aims of the UHP Dorset Dogs project are to:

- Raise awareness amongst dog owners and others of the important management issues and opportunities in relation to heathlands.
- Provide effective and consistent information on and off site for dog owners to support and promote responsible ownership and behaviour through targeted events, signs, leaflets, and online information.
- Provide support and advice to land managers on positive access management for people with dogs alongside effective engagement and education.
- Work across the project area ensuring that negative impacts are not transferred from one site to another; discouraging management that will displace problems elsewhere.
- Promote existing non-sensitive sites such as SANGs and areas where dogs are allowed off-lead.
- Support the development of new safe areas and SANGs for off-lead exercise, with involvement from the planning stage.
- Provide a broad and balanced coverage of dog owner-related issues, both positive and negative; avoiding a narrow focus to maintain the widest engagement.

Covid -19

While the context and aims of the project remain the same, dissemination of messages had to change in line with the Covid pandemic government restrictions, and public perception of organising events on site. This meant the usual pit stops, community events, on site visitor engagement etc had to be postponed and new activities/resources developed.

5.2 Results of 2020/21 Dorset Dog Engagement Events

The annual **Dorset Dogs Festival** was organised for 15th August 2020 but was cancelled due to uncertainty over covid-19 restrictions.

- **Pit stops** – 23 unmanned pit stops took place during late July and August 2020. Figure 2 shows the percentage split of these per council area.

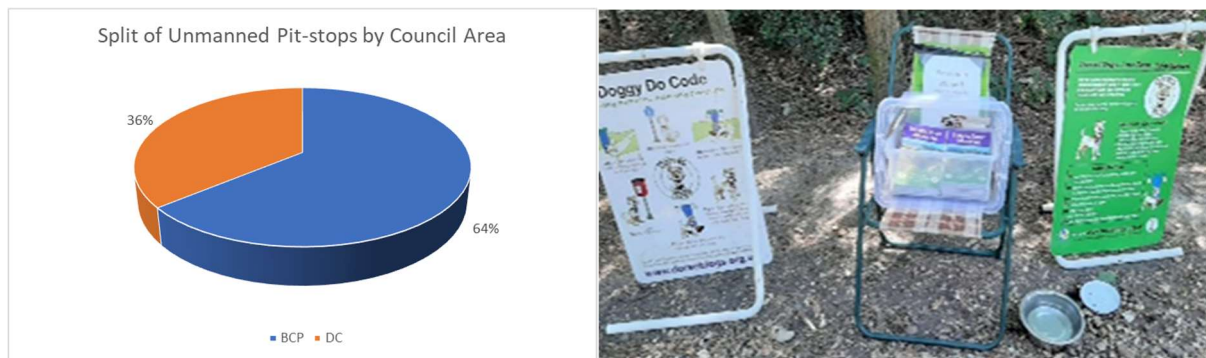


Figure 2 Shows the percentage split by Council area of unmanned pit stops delivered July and August 2020

- **Guided Walkies** – No guided walkies took place during this year due to covid-19
- **Dorset Dogs Website** saw high traffic throughout the year and continued to be an invaluable tool for sharing the constant changing covid-19 information, promoting responsible dog behaviour, promoting positive access for dogs and their owners and raising awareness of issues and opportunities for dog owners in Dorset's towns, coast and countryside. It also provides the opportunity to engage with local businesses through its dog friendly and Wagipawdia pages, promote events and the Doggy Do Code. From April 2020 to March 2021 the website received **38,649** individual site sessions. Drilling down further there were:
 - **69,919** page views, 38,649 individual site sessions with 89.1% of those being new visitors to the website in that year.
 - **5,904** page views of the 'Out & About' pages providing extensive information about sites.

- **10,207** page views of the home page which always maintains a 'key message' such as ground-nesting birds and links to more detail within the website or Facebook.
 - **1181** page views of the Doggy Do Code home page.
 - **3,814** page views to 'dog-friendly' pages, these are provided in association with businesses/attractions and help fund the website.
 - **7,082** page views of the 'events page'
 - **15,234** page views of the animal rescue organisations page*
- *While there was a reduction in visits to the dog-friendly pages and the events page there was a marked increase in page views of the animal rescue organisations page reflecting the situation during the pandemic.*

- **Social Media** Dorset Dogs platforms are Facebook and Instagram and have proven to be vital in disseminating messages and engaging with the public throughout a time when many issues came to light as sites were increasingly used for exercise by many who may not have visited Heathland sites before.

Facebook analytics for 2020/21 include:

- Facebook views. -They range from around 600 views to a peak of 4,000 views with most posts viewed by around 1000 people
- The post with the maximum reach was 8.3K
- **4997** followers on 31 March 2020 – a leap of 587 new followers over the previous year.
- **33,600** engagement which is an increase of 19% on the previous year
- The organic reach of Dorset Dogs was **33,395** people in the year to 31 March 2020 (those who saw a Dorset Dogs post at least once)
- An average of 26 posts are added each month on Facebook, these detail events, photographs and key messages.

Figure 3 shows the level of engagement on the Dorset Dogs Facebook page with May the highest reach (**91,053**). it was felt this was due to the initial covid-19 lockdown and more people going out and exploring their local environment as well as it had reliable and up to date Covid 19 information linked to the main Dorset Heaths website. During May after the Wareham forest fire there was a lot of social media activity on the fire and the promotion of the UHP BBQ campaign. Figure 3 shows the monthly Facebook post reach. The total post reach for the year was **379,053** of which there were **26,651** post engagements. Face book followers peaked at **5,114** during the year.

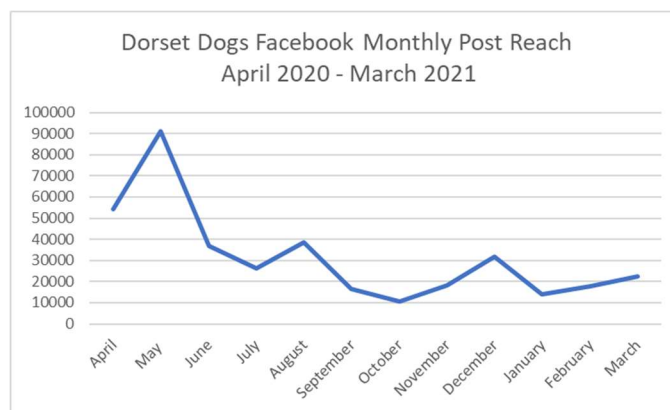


Figure 3 shows the monthly Facebook post reach for Dorset Dogs April 2020 – March 2021.

Comments from posts:

- “Excellent video, if you do another, I will keep an eye out for it”
- “Happy to be a Dorset Dog and looking forward to a time when we can get out and about and meet new doggy friends”
- “This is amazing, what a cool idea! Great video, very professionally edited.”
- “This is brilliant”.
- “Love this initiative Dorset Dogs – well done”

Instagram analytics for 2020/21:

Dorset Dogs has also continued to build a presence on Instagram and has continued to increase the number of followers from 620 at the end of March 2020 to **1,015** at the end of March 2021. This represents an increase of **61%**. An average of 1 post per week is added.

- **Membership** Through the website people with dogs are asked and encouraged to join as members by signing up to follow the doggy do code. The numbers of members signed up to Dorset Dogs as of 31st March 2021 is **2408**. Figure 4 shows the number of members signed up at the end of each financial year from 2010 to 2021.

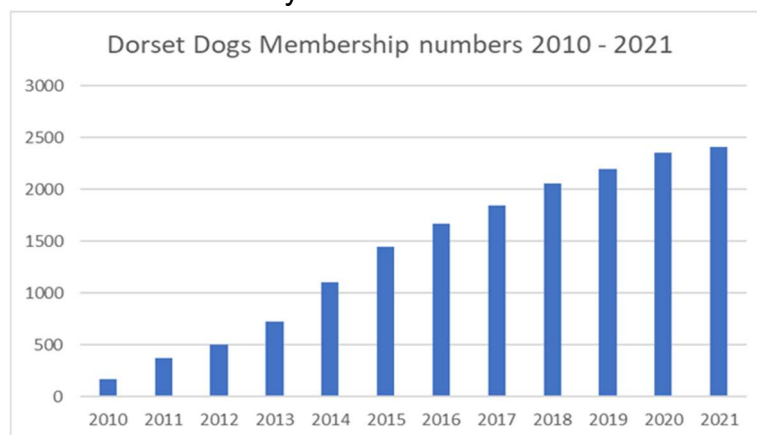


Figure 4 graph showing number of Dorset Dog members signed up to practice responsible behaviour and follow the Doggy Do Code between 2010 and 2021 (membership numbers as at 31st March each year).

- **Volunteers** – There was no volunteering this year due to covid-19 restrictions.
- **Liaison, Promotion and Advice** -The high level of engagement with Dorset Dogs has continued through this year including enquiries and liaison with land managers and staff, dog and countryside organisations, businesses and dog walkers. Discussions began to look at Dorset Dogs working closely with BCP to deliver a specific dog related project based at Hengistbury Head, including employment of a new Dorset Dogs Project Officer.
- **Commercial Dog Walkers Webinars**- Commercial dog walkers seen on sites continue to be an issue for land managers, Dorset Dogs organised 2 on-line webinars during March 2020 with the aim of engaging with them and raising their knowledge about heathlands and the expected behaviour on them in a positive way. The webinar included talks from a vet and Stephen Jenkinson, Countryside Access Advisor for the Kennel Club. Results from the webinars:
 - Webinar 1 attracted **23** attendees and **108** views of the recording.
 - Webinar 2 attracted **30** attendees and **34** views of the recording.

Feedback was obtained after the seminars from those who attended. Figures 5 and 6 below illustrate the answers as percentages from attendees to the webinars.

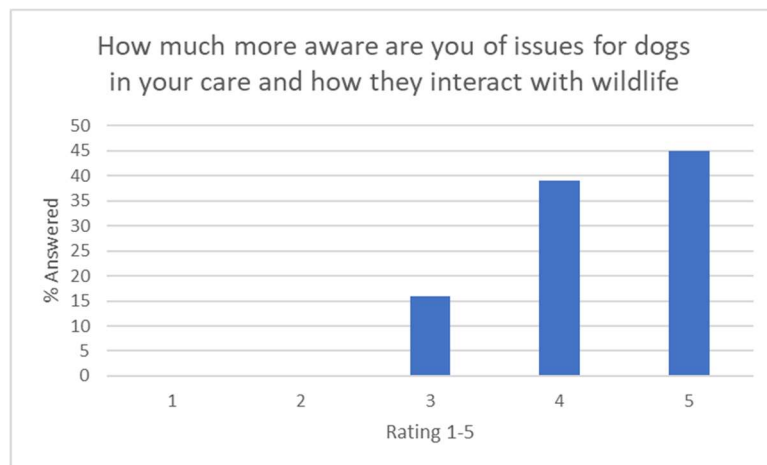


Figure 5 table showing the % split of respondents to the question: How much more aware are you of issues for dogs in your care and how they interact with wildlife

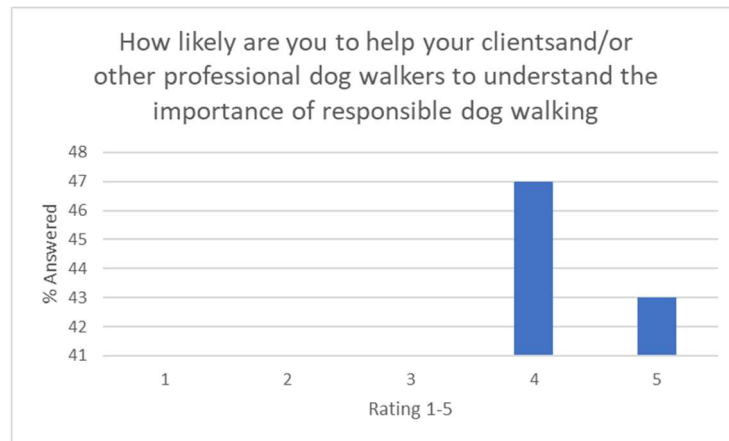


Figure 6 table showing the % split of respondents to the question: How likely are you to help your clients and/or other Professional Dog Walkers, to understand the importance of responsible dog walking?

other feedback from the webinars:

Attendees were asked: As a result of the webinar is there anything that you will now do differently when walking your client's dogs? If so, what would that be?

- *Greater awareness of seasonal restrictions - e.g. on-lead in certain areas where wildlife breeding/nesting etc (I've noticed signs I'd never seen before over past couple of weeks - so thanks Steve!!)*
- *Up-spec my first aid kit a little (bicarb & vinegar for sure - thanks Bev)*
- *Pay greater attention to getting microchip numbers and make clients aware of where they can check which database they are registered with –Setting check up dates to ensure vaccinations are up to date - will be great to help educate my clients by passing on information from Dorset Dogs and NPA*
- *I have taken great care to ensure I ran a professional business which meets everyone's needs. It's nice to see I have everything covered.*
- *This webinar was really well presented and would be suitable for someone just starting out in dog walking. For myself I have been doing the job nearly 9 years and would like something a bit more advanced for it to be developmental. I really appreciate the efforts that everyone goes to put these on.*
- *I think these webinars were extremely useful and I would welcome more, even if just on an annual basis.*

6.0 Dorset Firewise Communities Project



6.1 Context and aims of Dorset Firewise

The Dorset Firewise Communities Project started in January 2018 works to reduce risk of damage to homes from wildfire through knowledge and practical improvements to reduce hazards. Improving community cohesion and general wellbeing concentrating on building resilience against wildfire damage to residential properties in south east Dorset centred around communities on the urban interface with heathland sites. The project looks to deliver the following aims:

- Raise awareness of the consequences of wildfire and the risk to close by homes from embers
- Make homes and communities more resilient to wildfire
- Encourage communities to learn more about wildfire and their adjacent landscapes
- Create a network of Firewise Communities that can support each other

The Dorset Firewise Project Assistant works 14.8 hours per week with funding agreed until March 2022. Covid-19 meant that the Firewise project had to work and deliver differently as no face to face engagements took place this year. Further information about Dorset Firewise is available at: www.firewiseuk.org

6.2 Results of 2020/21 Dorset Firewise Project

- Delivered and mailed “hot strike” information to **18 properties** effected by the Wareham Forest fire.
- Delivered Firewise and BBQ campaign information to **54 campsites** close to Wareham Forest and across Purbeck area.
- Presented project to the England and Wales Wildfire Forum (EWWF) held in Cardiff which included over 200 delegates from 14 countries.
- Literature produced by Firewise adopted by National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) as material to be used across UK as standard Firewise information. This was confirmed after presentation to their wildfire committee on 26th February 2020
- Produced a leaflet based on research at Exeter University designed which gives homeowners/occupiers advice on safe garden planting using a traffic lights system to show which plants are more resistant to fire.
- Produced ‘Keep safe on the Heath’ postcards giving information on what to do if you see a fire on any heath. Also informing people never to have BBQ’s or campfires on any heath and to dispose of cigarette ends safely and appropriately. **250** Given to heathland visitors by Wardens and volunteers.
- Postcards designed and printed, to be delivered to high fire risk communities to promote Firewise messages after April 2021.
- Meeting with the Prevention Development Officer from Neighbourhood Watch to plan ways of working together unfortunately cancelled due to covid-19
- Linked with PHD student from Swansea University who is studying perceptions of wildfire in UK. They have carried out surveys in various locations and the outcome of this will be considered and used to direct our approach in the future.
- Presented to Woman in the Fire Service (Lebanon) webinar.
- Firewise Assistant interviewed by Dr Adrianna Ford from the Levehulme Centre for Wildfires at Imperial College London for her blog.
- Social media posts were started under the Firewise Facebook page during this year as a new method to engage, the post reach for the period was **3568**.

7.0 Monitoring

7.1 Context and Aims of UHP Monitoring

The aims of UHP Monitoring are as set out in The Revised Monitoring Strategy for the Dorset Heathlands SPD (Fearnley and Liley 2014), adopted as part of the SPD. They are to:

- Organise the collection and collation of different data sets to be analysed by Footprint Ecology and stored by DERC as part of the Monitoring Strategy.
- Support and advise partners as required in monitoring of Heathland Infrastructure projects (HIPs) including new access management projects or Suitable Alternative Greenspace (SANG) development.
- Organise and deliver monitoring for HIPs and SANGs as requested by partners.

A review of the Monitoring Framework was carried out by Chris Panter (Footprint Ecology) and Rachel Pearce (UHP) as requested by the Implementation Group in 2016/17. Monitoring continues in line with this report. The report is available on request.

7.2 Methods and results of monitoring

Monitoring is currently conducted using various methodology including:

- **Car Park Counts** - Car park transects provide a robust comparison between car parks over time across the heaths and related sites. This survey method involves 5 or 6 UHP and Partner Mitigation staff recording the number of cars parked at agreed car parking sites across the area. These range from small informal car parks or laybys, through to large car parks accessing or adjacent to heathland sites and a handful of “honeypot” sites. All data is collected and passed to Footprint Ecology for analysis and reporting.

Results of 2020/21 car park count surveys - 12 Co-ordinated car park counts were organised by the Monitoring Warden. The car park surveys are carried out over 2-hour periods, either between 7 - 9am, 10am - 12pm or 2 - 4pm on a variety of week, weekend and Bank Holiday days spread across the year. Due to Covid-19 lockdown restriction, counts organised for 19/04/20 and 08/05/20 were cancelled.

- **People Counting Sensors** - Remote people counting sensors are installed at entrances across a range of agreed sites. They count the number of passes either by using heat sensing beams that are broken when people pass or pressure pads in the ground that record passes when stepped on. The data provides trends of visitor numbers.



The sensors include pyros, long-range pyros, pressure slabs and one induction loop (used to record bicycles).

The number of project and SANG sensors will continue to vary as new SANGs are created and other mitigation project monitoring is carried out.

The Monitoring Warden collects data from and maintains the sensors. This includes regular checks and repairs or replacement, due to malfunction, vandalism or theft. Data is collected approximately every three/four months, downloaded and checked before sending to Footprint Ecology for analysis and reporting.

Results of 2020/21 People Counting sensor monitoring

28 core heathland sensors and **31** others have been maintained throughout this year. **35** other sensors are used for SANG sites, Heathland Infrastructure Projects, and at different visitor attractions. Data collection continued throughout the year unaffected by the pandemic restrictions, this was important to record the effects of the restrictions imposed on visitor trends.

- **Incident recording – Dorset Explorer**

The Monitoring Warden coordinates reporting and recording of any illegal or destructive activities which will impact of the heath. 'Incidents' are recorded by mitigation staff and officers on the Dorset Council's 'Dorset Explorer' system and cover a range of activities including fires, motorcycles/off-roading, fly tipping and vandalism. Fire data is gathered to record the number of fires and area of damage to the heathland SPA. Other incidents such as motorbikes on site, fly-tipping and drones on site for example are recorded to inform and focus the resources for SAMM delivery.

Results of 2020/21 incident recording – Figure 7 shows the number of fires recorded on heathland sites across Dorset from 2007/08 – 2020/21 financial years. The trend has shown that fires have decreased significantly since a peak in 2010/11 although there was a spike in this year this still shows a 30% decline in fires recorded in 2020/21 as compared to the 2010/11 high.

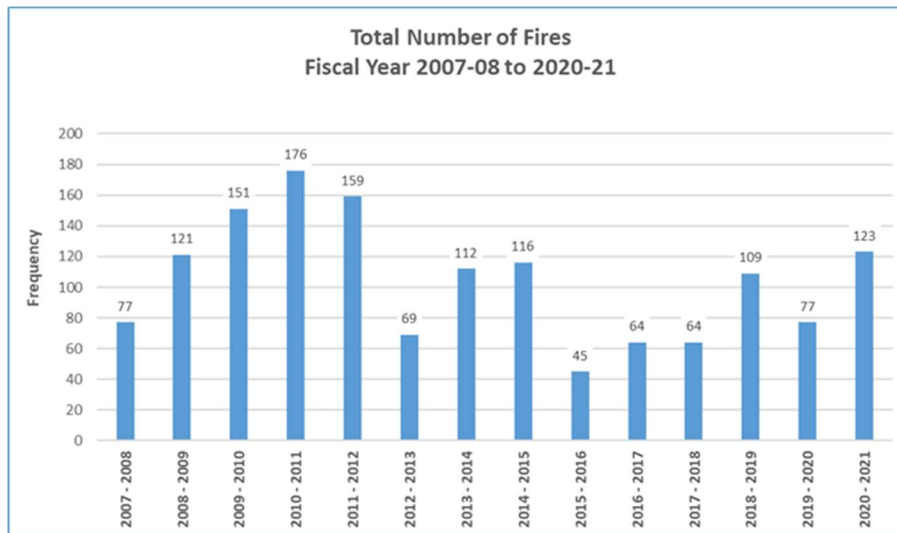


Figure 7 shows the number of fires recorded on heathland sites across south east Dorset from 2007/08 – 2020/21.

Figure 8 shows a large increase in area burnt in 2020/21, due to the Wareham Forest fire which was over 180 hectares in size. This was thought to have been started by disposing a BBQ. There is evidence from wardens that the number of campfires and BBQs on site have increased significantly

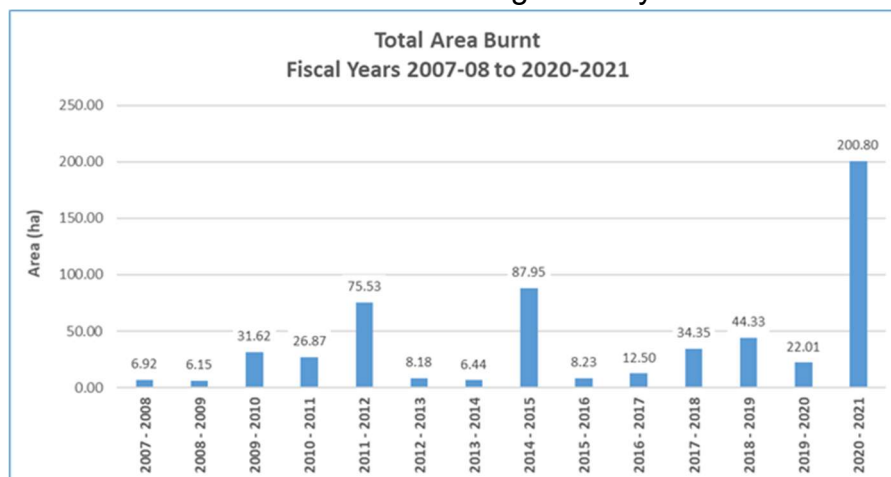


Figure 8 shows the total area of heathland burnt across south east Dorset from 2007/08 – 2020/21

The full 2020 -2021 UHP Monitoring Report produced by Footprint Ecology which reports on and summarises data collected will be available online from the UHP Website <https://www.dorsetheaths.org.uk/reports> or from the UHP Office once completed.

7.3 Other Monitoring Carried Out during 2020/21

- **Dorset Open Spaces Survey** - UHP conducted an online survey to understand how the Covid-19 restrictions influenced behaviour and patterns of visitors to Dorset's open spaces. The questions explored how the visitations of Dorset's residents to open spaces changed during lockdown. In the period between 22nd April and 6th May 2020, there were 339 responses.

91% of respondents had visited an open space since lockdown begun. The results showed that:

- 50.3% of respondents live in the Dorset Council area, 49.4% in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council area and 0.3% (1 respondent) live just over the border in Hampshire in the New Forest District Council area.
- The top 3 postcode areas that respondents live in are the Wareham BH20 area (43 respondents), Wimborne BH20 area (36 respondents) and the Poole BH17 area (31 respondents). The top 3 most commonly visited sites by respondents during lockdown (Canford Heath, Wareham Forest and Upton Heath) are all located within or partially within these postcode areas.
- Before lockdown, the top 3 commonly visited open spaces visited by respondents were Upton Country Park, Wareham Forest (53) and Studland Beach and Heath (52). During lockdown the 3 most commonly visited sites were Canford Heath (50), 'Local trails and roads' (35) and Wareham Forest (31).
- Prior to lockdown, 57% of participants visited an open space at least every other day. 1% said they did not visit an open space at all. Once in lockdown, the number of people visiting an open space at least every other day rose to 68%. 9% said they had not visited an open space since lockdown.
- 77% of respondents said the frequency of their visits to open spaces had changed since lockdown begun. Comments suggested this was because some respondents were now staying home and shielding from the virus. Others were visiting open spaces more frequently as they felt it was important for their wellbeing.
- Dog walking and walking were the main activities carried out by most respondents on open spaces before lockdown begun (41% and 40% respectively). 3% respondents said cycling/mountain biking was their main activity. During lockdown dog walking and walking remained the most common activities (40% and 36%). Cycling/mountain biking was the main activity on open spaces for 6% of respondents in lockdown.
- 50% of respondents said their main activity carried out on open spaces had changed since lockdown begun. Reasons for this mainly attributed to not being able to drive due to lockdown restrictions and the closure of centres and group activities.
- Before lockdown begun, 68% respondents travelled to open spaces by car/van and 26% walked. Since lockdown begun only 5% of respondents said that they travelled to sites by car/van. Those walking to site had increased to 78% of respondents. 28% of respondents said that they had discovered new sites since lockdown had begun.

For more information or to request a copy of the full report please contact Chloe Lewis (chloe.lewis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

- **Monitoring of SANGs** - Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) are new or enhanced greenspaces of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation for development likely to affect the Dorset Heathland European and internationally protected sites. They are designed to absorb recreation pressure that would otherwise occur on these fragile sites. SANG monitoring

methodology follows principles set out in the Dorset Heathlands SPD and may include onsite tally counts, onsite interviews, installation of automated people counters and car park monitoring in line with the Dorset Heathlands Monitoring Strategy. Advice and consultation regarding SANG monitoring and project monitoring has been given to partners, ecologists and developers working with SANG development within the project area and work with partners and developers continues. During 2020/21 monitoring of SANGs have taken place at:

- Cherry Tree HIP (Heathland Infrastructure Project) - summary report form this is available on request.
- **Wildlife Monitoring** - Monitoring of three key heathland indicator bird species, Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Nightjar is commissioned annually by UHP and carried out by the RSPB. Due to staff being furloughed the bird surveys did not take place during 2020.

8.0 Budget

The budget for the Core Team agreed for the 2020 -2021 financial year was £285,696 including monitoring costs listed below, this budget is split between the two Unitary Councils from developer contributions collected from development within 5Km of any heathland site. Dorset Council contribute 27% plus hosting costs and BCP Council contribute 73%.

The monitoring delivery costs are shown in figure 9 – for this year the overall costs are lower due to renegotiated costs with GIS and DERC and the bird surveys not taking place.

Monitoring Revenue Expenditure 2018 -19	Amount
Footprint Ecology	£5,200
Dorset Environmental Records Centre	£3,500
Dorset Explorer GIS maintenance	£2,000
Bird Surveys	£0**
Total	£10,700*

* This total is split equally between the Local Authority Partners

** Bird surveys did not take place during 2020

Figure 9 – the monitoring delivery costs for UHP 2020 -2021

9.0 Wardening

The wardening element of SAMM is delivered by the Local Authority partners with Mitigation Staff employed within their own teams where possible.

A Service Level Agreement is in place between the Local Planning Authorities to agree a consistent approach to the wardening element of SAMM. The agreed key elements are:

- Provision of a presence on heathland sites within the Local Authority area including those managed by partners and privately-owned sites to encourage appropriate behaviour and signpost users to alternative open spaces. This may include patrols, educational visits and on-site activities or events where appropriate.
- Attending where deemed appropriate and resources allow local community events to promote responsible use of heathlands and alternative open spaces.
- Respond following agreed Partner or UHP protocol to fire incidents and assist DWFRS and Dorset Police at incidents as necessary.
- Supporting where necessary and resources allow, the UHP Education Officer in delivering the agreed heathland education programme.
- Supporting where necessary and resources allow, the UHP Monitoring Officer in contributing to data collection as defined in the Monitoring Strategy for Dorset Heathlands and recording incidents on Dorset Explorer.
- Provide reasonable support for staff working in other areas during emergencies or high incident occurrences.
- Maintain communication with partner staff to ensure consistent service delivery across Partnership area.
- Progress reporting of work to the UHP Team Manager to allow annual reporting to the Dorset Heathland Advisory Group.

10.0 Other Mitigation Work

During 2020/21 Dorset Council continued to fund a part-time (0.5 FTE) post within the UHP Team to provide heathland mitigation for development in the Crossways and Bere Regis areas which impact on heathland sites within 5km.

This work includes:

- Education working with local schools to deliver sessions to raise awareness of the heathland habitat as well as attending local community events disseminating the same messages.
- Wardening that provides an extra presence on Winfrith, Tadnoll and Black Hill heaths working in co-ordination with the site managers, engaging with site visitors to encourage responsible behaviour and raise awareness of the heathland habitat.

- Monitoring where data is collected from people counting sensors, on site perception surveys and co-ordinated car park counts. The West and North Dorset Warden and Monitoring Officer has also been advising on the development of SANGs and other mitigation projects at Frenches Farm, Upton and Bog Lane, Stoborough.
- Working with Dorset Dogs to support land managers with dog related issues.

Results of 2020/21 other mitigation work – Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there was limited delivery of the work originally agreed however the role was adapted and included:

- Producing posters to be displayed on heathland sites regarding heathland messages and covid-19 regulations.
- Launching the ‘Dorset Heaths’ social media profiles and creating associated content, statistics
- Collaborating with Litter Free Dorset to develop and deliver the ‘BBQs Burn More Than Bangers’ campaign and delivering posters/leaflets along with other members of the team.
- Designing interpretation panels for Blackhill Heath, Bere Regis, to tackle the specific issue of cycling off bridleways and jump digging.



11.0 Dorset Urban Heaths Grazing Partnership

UHP hosts the Grazing Co-ordinator post and Casual Assistant on behalf of Dorset Urban Heaths Grazing Partnership (DUHGP). DUHGP is funded through Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreements held by BCP Council, Dorset Council and Dorset Wildlife Trust. DUHGP works together using grazing as a management tool across numerous sites to improve site condition and biodiversity.



Results of 2020/21 delivered to DUHGP members included:

- Daily checks of livestock and all welfare and husbandry related activities.
- Provision of a 24hr standby for emergencies - 18 callouts took place during the 2020/21 year, these included escaped cattle, motorbikes worrying livestock, dealing with dead cattle, husbandry and welfare issues.
- Handling administration of cattle movements and TB testing.
- Practical help with TB testing and any livestock issues. Organising and undertaking 4 separate whole herd tests for partners comprising presenting the cattle in a crush twice 3, days apart for vets to inject then read results.

- Maintaining stocking levels across partnership sites to achieve grazing requirements. 15 stock movements took place during the 2020/21 year involving moving stock in a livestock trailer.
- GPS collars introduced on cattle to provide location information to help finding them and produce management information such as heatmaps showing preferred grazing locations.

12.0 Further Information

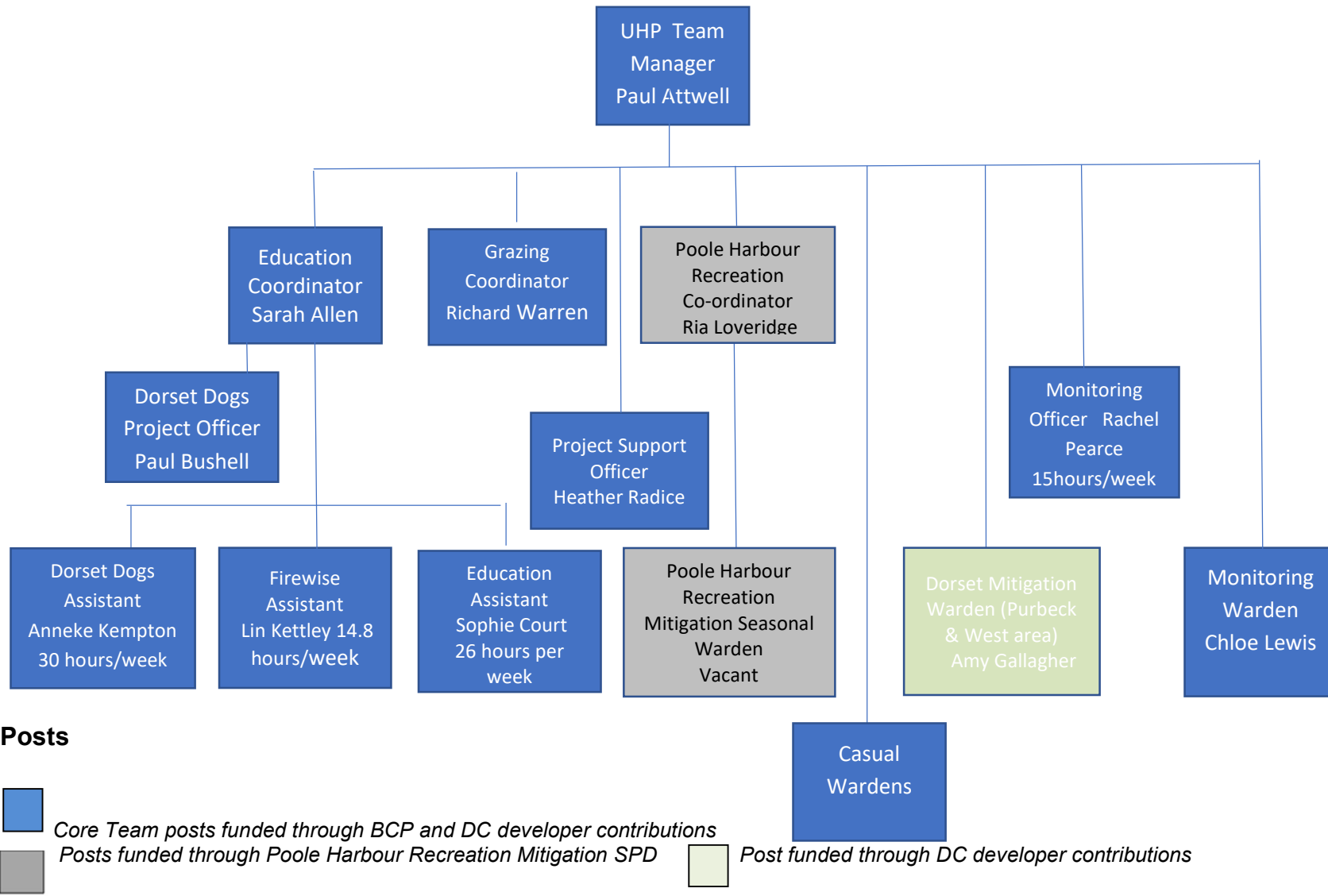
Further information on any of the work within this report is available on-line at:

Website: www.dorsetheaths.org.uk

Email: urbanheaths@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01202 642787.

Appendix 1 –Urban Heaths Partnership Staff Structure as of March 2021



Appendix 2 - UHP Education Target Schools 2020-2021

List showing the UHP target schools as agreed by the Partnership

School	Local Authority for 2019/20	Activity: HHA=Heathland Habitat Awareness. ACD= Arson Courtroom Drama
Heathlands Primary	BCP	HHA
Kingsleigh Primary	BCP	HHA
Christ The King	BCP	HHA
Elm Academy - Leaf	BCP	HHA
Kinson Primary	BCP	HHA
Bourne Academy	BCP	ACD
Oak Academy - Leaf	BCP	ACD
Glenmoor Academy	BCP	ACD
Winton Academy	BCP	ACD
Hamworthy Park Junior	BCP	HHA
Broadstone First	BCP	HHA
Canford Heath Junior	BCP	HHA
Merley First	BCP	HHA
Manorside Primary	BCP	HHA
Talbot Primary	BCP	HHA
Bishop Aldhelms Primary	BCP	HHA
Haymoor Junior	BCP	HHA
Upton Junior	BCP	HHA
Broadstone Middle	BCP	ACD
Carter Community	BCP	ACD
St Aldhelms Academy	BCP	ACD
Magna Academy	BCP	ACD
Highcliffe Primary	BCP	HHA
Highcliffe Comprehensive	BCP	ACD
The Grange	BCP	ACD
Twynham	BCP	ACD
Ferndown Middle	DC	ACD
Lockyers Middle	DC	ACD
West Moors Middle	DC	ACD
Sandford Primary	DC	HHA
Lychett Minster	DC	ACD
The Purbeck	DC	ACD