

Dorset Heaths Partnership Annual Delivery Report 2025 - 2026



For People | For Wildlife | Forever

DHP website and social media



Facebook 101,067 post reach, a 66% increase on previous year
Instagram 2,375 accounts engaged
Website 1492 visits, down over 50% on last year



Heathland wildfires

116 fires on heathland sites,
156 hectares of heathland destroyed,
considerably more than recent years due
to 2 large fires on Newton Heath and
Holt Heath in 2025.

Dorset Dogs engagement



2810 members
Facebook 220,061 post views
293 engagement events
2559 people engaged with
1478 goody bags given out



Education

9,363 students took part in a school
session delivered by DHP
227 sessions delivered to schools

BBQ Campaign



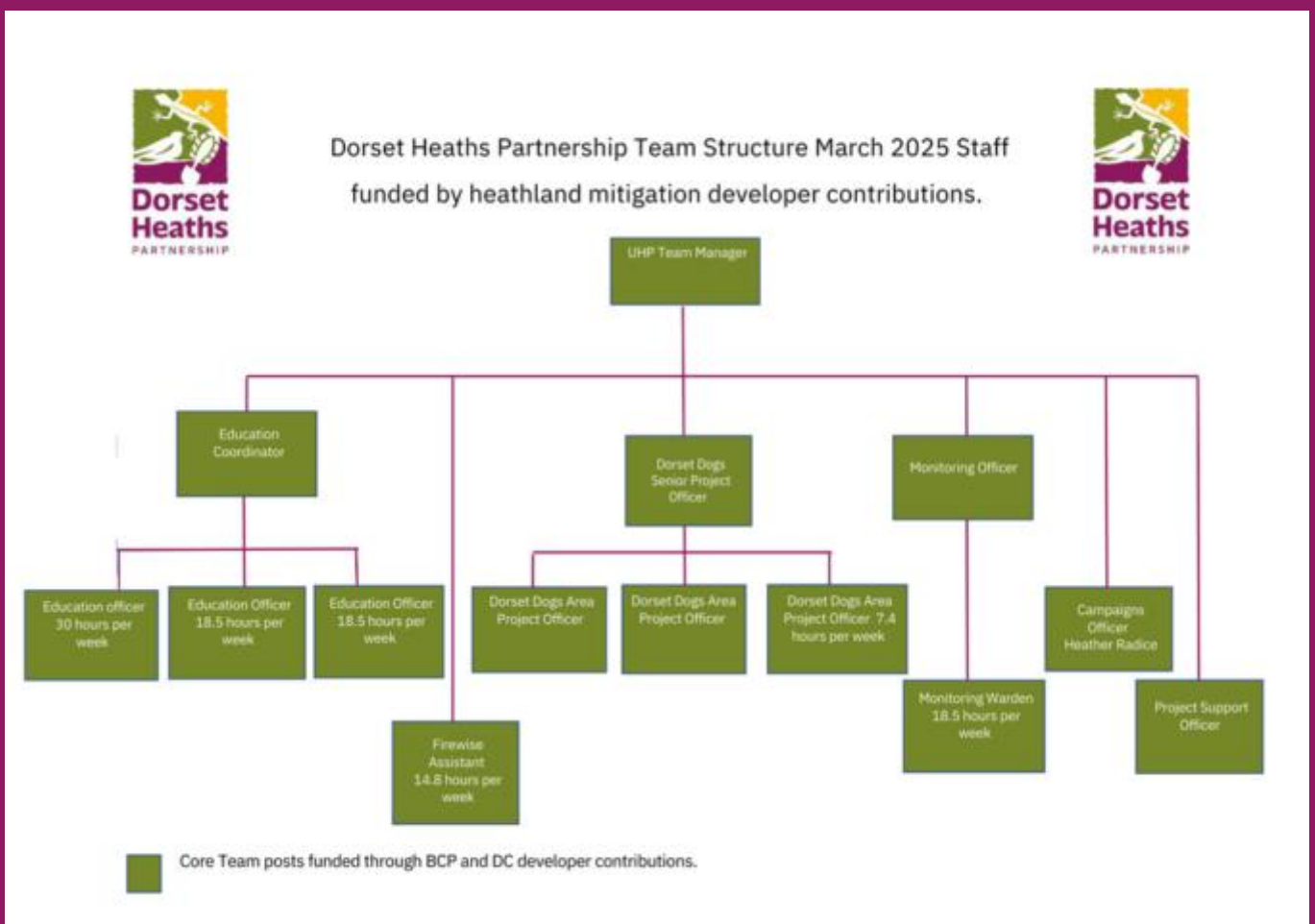
30 banners displayed on high risk sites
34 campsites provided with information

Introduction

The 2025-2026 year for Dorset Heaths Partnership (DHP) started with very warm weather around Easter when there was a number of heathland fires, these both continued to be the themes for the summer months providing challenging times for the Dorset Heaths and the partnership staff.

Working closely with our partners, we continued to use evidence-based engagement, monitoring, and behaviour change initiatives to reduce recreational impacts and safeguard these special landscapes for wildlife and people alike.

This report highlights the key achievements, challenges, and outcomes delivered during the year and demonstrates how Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) continues to support the long-term protection of Dorset's heathlands



Governance and budget

The delivery of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) by the DHP Core Team is managed by the Team Manager, steered by the Dorset Heaths Delivery Group reporting to the Dorset Heaths Partnership Heathland and Heathlands Air Quality Mitigation Steering Group. The Core Team is hosted by Dorset Council within the Environment, Policy and Partnerships team in the Place Directorate.

The budget for the 2025/26 financial year was £544,133 including staff, running costs and all monitoring. Funded through developer contributions collected by BCP and Dorset Councils. This does not include funding for wardening.

Background

Heathland Mitigation across south east Dorset is delivered as set out in the Dorset Heaths Supplementary Planning Document 2020-2025 (SPD) adopted by Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council. The first SPD was introduced in 2007 and has been renewed four times since. The latest SPD for the period 2020-2025 was adopted on 31st March 2020. The objective of this SPD is to set out a strategy for the avoidance and mitigation of impacts of new residential development upon the Dorset Heathlands.

This Annual Delivery Report focuses on the (SAMM) delivery for the period 1st April 2025 - 31st March 2026, reporting on delivery against the Dorset Heaths Core Team delivery Plan



DHP Education Team



DHP Campaigns Officer



DHP Team on winter walk

Co-ordination

Page 5

There are 6 main
strands to the work
of the Core Team

Page 4

Education

Page 7

Dorset Dogs

Page 15

Communications and campaigns

Page 21

Monitoring

Page 12

Firewise

Page 28

Objectives of Co-ordination:

- Develop and monitor the implementation of the DHP Delivery Plan.
- Co-ordinate the DHP team delivery of SAMM elements in line with the approved budget.
- Support co-ordination of the wardening element of SAMM across the area on all heathland sites.
- Monitor delivery of SAMM and report annually.
- Support partners with strategic heathland mitigation.
- Promote DHP work and strategic messages to partners, locally and nationally.



Co-ordination Delivery

Co-ordination of DHP is lead by the Team Manager, and included:

Delivery of:

- The DHP Annual Report for Financial year 2024/25.
- Fire training led by Andy Elliott of DWFRS to 36 Partnership Staff
- Stand at Dorset County Show to promote messages to widest audience.

Facilitation of:

- Signing sites covered by the Open Land Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) banning fires and BBQs on heathland sites across the Dorset Council area working with the Dorset National Landscapes team and Dorset Council Legal Team.
- Training of 12 partnership staff to allow enforcement of PSPO.
- 2 Steering Group and 2 DHP Delivery Group meetings.
- 2 wider mitigation staff meetings to share area wide knowledge across all staff.
- Dorset Dogs Focus Group exploring messages for bird nesting season.
- Operation Heathland meetings on behalf of the partnership.
- Preparation of Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve (PHNNR) visitor management strategy.
- The team supporting Reptile rescues after 2 large fire incidents
- Managing Dogs in the Countryside seminar with Dorset Dogs.
- Steering Group planning Great OutDorset event for 2026
- Review of Fire Access mapping/site information held by DWFRS

Recruitment of:

- Dorset Dogs Area Project Officer





Students from Haymoor Junior School

Objectives of Education:

- Deliver a co-ordinated approach to education across the Partnership.
- Identify and contact Target Schools offering free 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.
- The education programme is delivered by the Education Co-ordinator and 3 part-time Education Officers amounting to 2.8 FTE.

Education Programme

The programme for schools delivers sessions which are all curriculum linked while delivering the desired heathland themed messages to 65 target schools (schools across the area within 1km of a heathland site).

Arson Courtroom Drama (ACD) – delivered to Key Stage 3 students, year 8 students (aged 12-13 years). The session reinforces the importance of heathlands due to their wildlife and biodiversity and practically highlights the consequences of heathland fires to the wildlife, people and the local community infrastructure. The sessions are fully interactive sessions with students acting out parts within a courtroom setting discussing the issues and crime.

Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) - interactive virtual activity – delivered to Key Stage 3 students, to engage with them about the dangers of Heathland fires to people and wildlife and test the skills and intuition of young people

Heathland themed sessions - delivered to Key Stage1 (Age 5-7) and Key Stage 2 students (Age 7-11) – sessions are themed around getting out and about on the heath to inspire students on the diversity and interest of the heathland habitat and wildlife.

Early Years Foundation Stage (Age 3-5)- work has continued with this age group at Upton Country Park delivering ‘Roots and Shoots’ with SMILE Lone Parent Families community group and at Stour Valley delivering the Nature Tots Club. Activities delivered included: sensory nature trails, heath spotter trails, heathland animal talk, nature wreaths, nature bracelets. While activities are aimed at early years, children are always accompanied by adults allowing heathland messages to be delivered directly to parents/carers.



Sarah delivering to students from Kinson Academy

Education Delivery

- Student engagement- a total of 9,363 students from Early Years to Key Stage 3 took part in activities or lessons with, combining accompanying adults and teachers brings the total to 13,643. Figure 1 shows a comparison of the number of students engaged with over the last 11 years. Figure 2 shows the split of students engaged between BCP and Dorset Council areas.

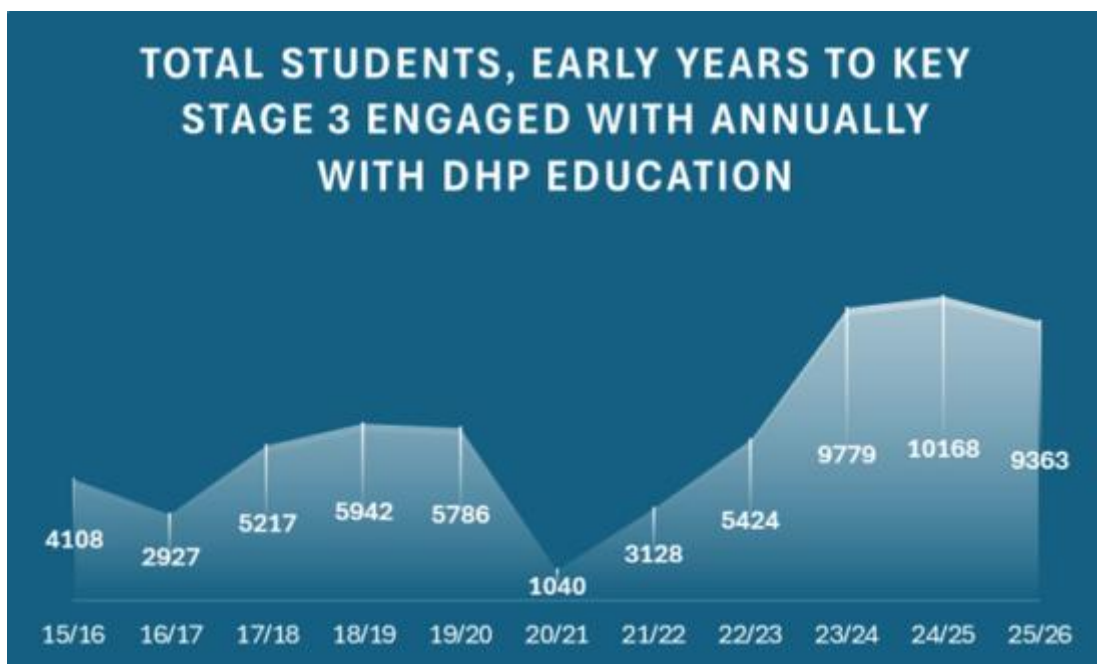


Figure 1

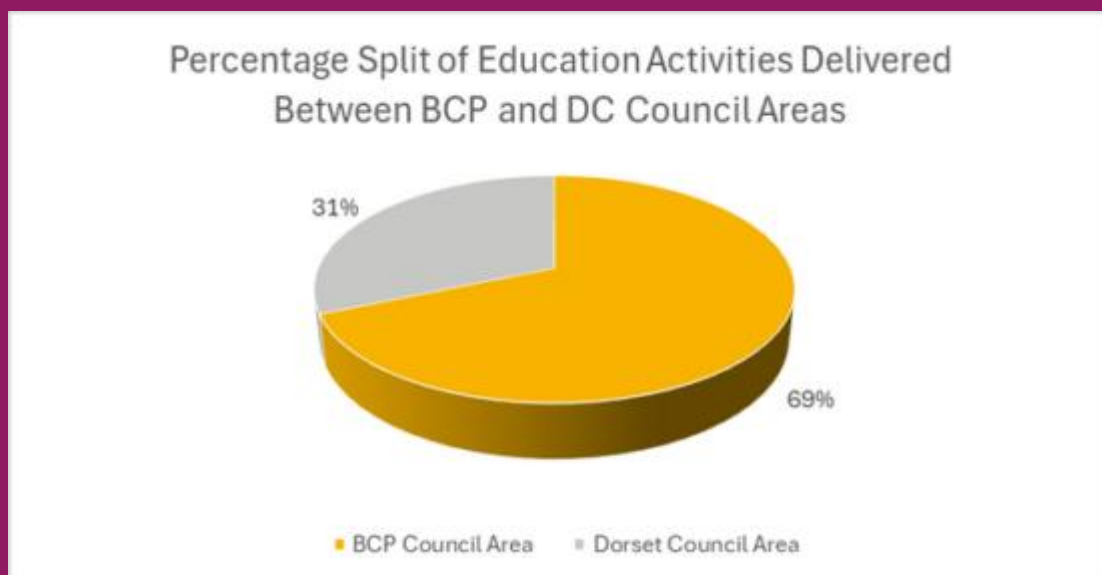


Figure 2



Nature Tots at Hengistbury Head

- 106 ACD and CSI sessions delivered in 19 schools reaching 3346 students
- 64 schools on target list, 75% of these received sessions during the year.
- 121 heathland related activities delivered in 30 schools, 69% of these were delivered on a heathland local to the school.
- Nature Tots activities at Kingfisher Barn and Hengistbury Head attracted an overall total of 1111 children and 1095 adults to the 68 activities with 10% being new attendees each week.
- The Team engaged with 2294 adults and children at events throughout the year, these included events at Hengistbury Head, Avon Heath Country Park, Knoll Beach, Upton Country Park, Dorset County Show, School career fairs and activities at libraries.

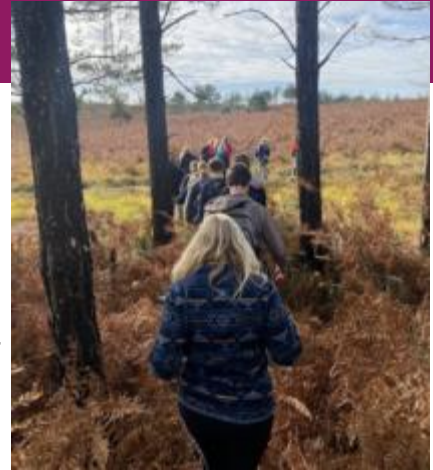
Other Work Included:

- Supported the Purbeck Nature Network; this involved planning and delivery of education as part of the National Trust's project to provide access to nature for children living in the Purbeck area. Working across all key stages in schools in the Purbeck area delivering assemblies, careers talks, field trips, practical tasks, this also included involvement in National Trust environmental leaders course and holiday nature experiences. Supported Teacher Training run by National Trust and activities at Purbeck Goes Wild School camps.
- Delivered heath trips for Hillside Community School in collaboration with Air Quality Mitigation Officer as part of the community outreach work.
- Attended Careers fairs and Science fairs for both Primary and Secondary schools.
- Delivered holiday events and activities across reserves in Dorset Council and BCP Council areas including Upton Country Park, Hengistbury Head visitor Centre, Shell Bay and libraries.
- Facilitated Heath visits for uniform groups to Canford heath, Upton Heath and Sandford Heath.
- Worked with community group the SMILE project increasing access to nature with parents
- Outside Classroom day attended, organised by Dorset Coast Forum.
- Delivered lecture to Bournemouth University students on Management of Natural Hazards
- Delivered heathland theme sessions in partnership with AFC Community Sports Trust.
- Delivered activities during heath week, including bio-blitz event at Upton Country Park, Sandford Heath wildlife walk.

Feedback on education delivery:

- *A massive THANK YOU!! From the school for all your efforts hosting last week, as well as the prep and assembly time. This project really is appreciated by them and they see the work that goes into delivering it, as well as all the benefits!*

The Purbeck School - partnership delivery with National Trust



Students from University of Exeter at Wareham Forest

- *Thank you so much we really enjoyed ourselves. The children loved being in the outdoors and were talking about how fun the activities were.*

Kinson Academy

- *Thank you very much for leading all our Y8 lessons this week. They have been amazing and the children have been buzzing about their sessions (dressing up made it a lot of fun!). I think it landed really well and consolidated the learning they did on Dunyeats in Y7.*

Broadstone Middle School

- I just wanted to extend a huge thank you for the excellent presentation you delivered to my students yesterday at Bournemouth University on our Disaster Management Masters degree. My unit, Management of Natural Hazards, can only have a real impact when students get to hear about the realities of this work on the ground, and your presentation truly brought everything to life.

Bournemouth University



Students at Ferndown Middle School Fire Day

Objectives of Monitoring:

The objectives of DHP 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 and updated 2017. 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 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.
- Consider new data collection that will support monitoring of heathland mitigation.

Monitoring Delivery:

Monitoring is currently conducted by 1 full time Monitoring Officer and 1 part time Monitoring Warden amounting to 1.5 FTE using various methodology including:

- Car park count surveys - 14 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 recording the number of cars parked at agreed car parking sites across the area using 6 different routes simultaneously.



People counting Pyro Sensor installed in oak post

- People counting sensor monitoring - 19 core heathland sensors and 3 on non heathland sites have been maintained and data downloaded. 28 other sensors are used for monitoring at SANG sites, Heathland Infrastructure Projects, and at different visitor attractions.
- Monitoring of 3 key heathland indicator bird species, Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Nightjar is commissioned annually by DHP and carried out by the RSPB. The results are added to the Dorset Explorer data base and reported in the Annual Monitoring Report produced by Footprint Ecology.
- Monitoring of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) 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 2025/26 monitoring of SANGs have taken place at:
 - Huntley Down HIP, Milborne St Andrew – Round 1
 - Mudeford Woods HIP – Round 1
 - Priests Way HIP – Round 2
 - Silverlake SANG – Round 2



Wild Woodbury SANG



Fire site Newton Heath

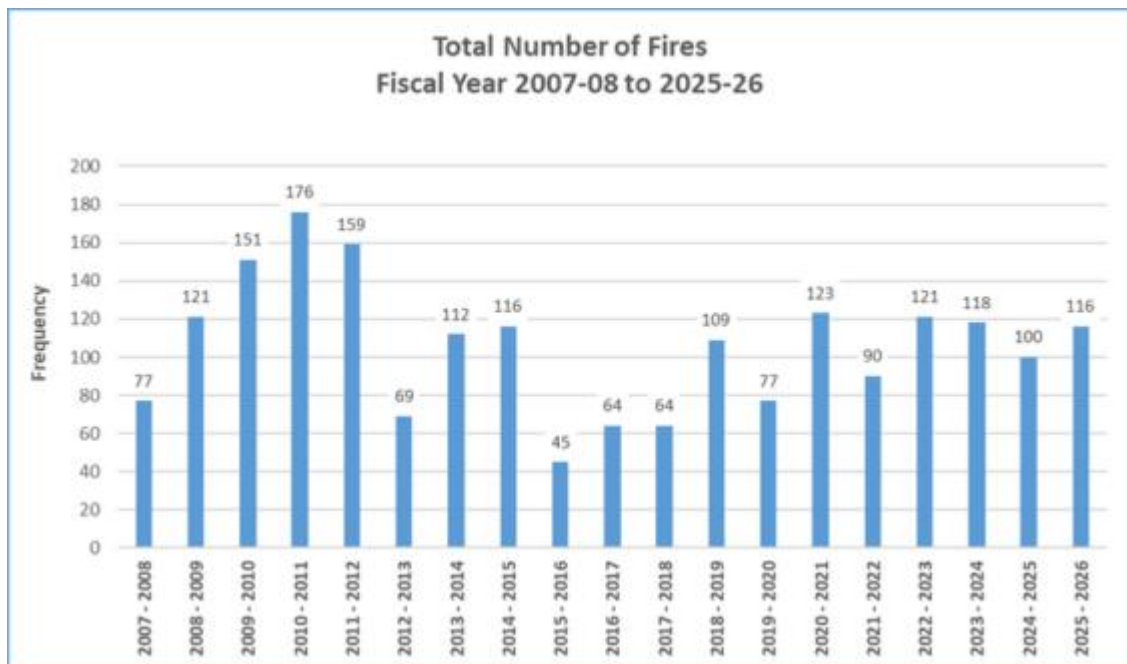


Figure 3

- Incident recording (Fires) – Figure 3 shows the number of fires recorded on heathland sites across Dorset from 2007/08 – 2025/26 financial years. While the number of fires was similar in 2025-26 to recent years the area burnt as shown in figure 4 increased considerably, due to 2 large fires on Newton Heath and Holt Heath.
- Figure 4 shows the total area of heathland burnt in each year since 2007.

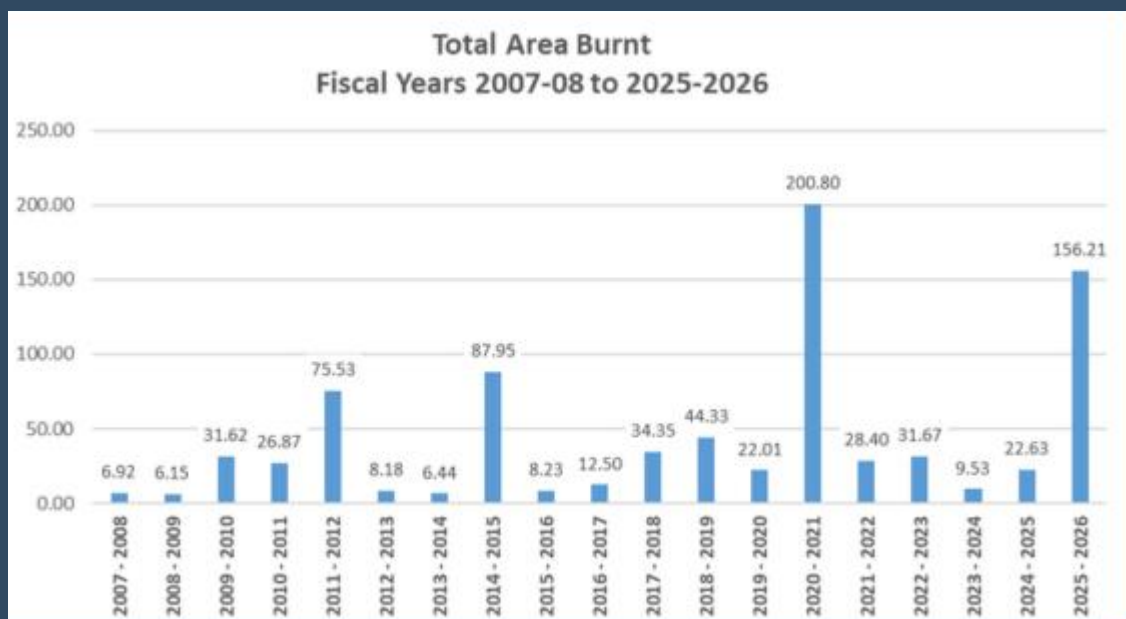


Figure 4

Objectives of Dorset Dogs:

- To provide support and advice to land managers on positive access management for people with dogs alongside effective engagement and education discouraging management that will displace problems elsewhere.
- Raise awareness amongst dog owners and others of the important management issues and opportunities in relation to heathlands with consistent information on and off site to support and promote responsible ownership and behaviour through targeted events, signs, leaflets, and online information.
- 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.
- Pioneer new and innovative ways to work and lead the way in advocating a positive balance between dogs and wildlife in Dorset.
- Provide a broad and balanced coverage of dog owner-related issues, both positive and negative, avoiding a narrow focus to maintain the widest engagement.



Dog walker on heathland path



Dorset Dogs Delivery:

The Dorset Dogs project is delivered by 2 full time and 2 part time project officers, equating to 3.0 FTE.

Face to face engagement:

At 293 events, 2559 people were engaged with and 1478 Dorset Dogs goody bags were given out. This is a slight decrease in the number of events and number engaged with compared to the previous year (just over 300 less engagements). A number of factors effected this, the high temperatures during summer 2025 meant that less people were engaged with on site. During June, July, August and September there were 38 days with temperatures above 23 degrees celsius meaning that generally people are not on site walking dogs in these temperatures. A number of dog events were either cancelled or not attended because of the high temperatures. Staff time available due to a change in personnel and sick leave also effected the numbers engaged with.

Face to face engagement made up of:

- **49** pit stops took place at a variety of sites providing a focal point on site to deliver on-site face to face engagement with visitors.
- **235** Park and Patrols took place at a variety of sites, where the Dorset Dogs van is parked on or close to site with information displayed while the Officer walks around the site engaging with visitors.
- **9** local community events were attended engaging with visitors and promoting the Dorset Dog messages. including the Dorset County Show, Bourne Free Dog Show , Upton Country Park, Avon Heath Country Park, Margaret Green Animal Rescue Country Dog Show and joint events with Forestry England and Dorset Police Rural Crime Team.



A Dorset Dogs Pitstop



Engagement through the website and social media:

- The Dorset Dogs website continues to be consistently ranked top in the most popular search engines.
- Dorset Dogs continues to use Facebook and Instagram platforms, these have continued to be vital in disseminating messages and engaging with the public with continuing high numbers using these to find information. In October 2025, 'Reach' ceased to be a metric measured by Meta for Facebook, being replaced by 'Views' as the common insight across platforms Facebook Views = 220,061. Instagram Views = 47,055 (from September 2025).
- 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 2026 is 2810. Figure 6 shows the number of members signed up at the end of each financial year from 2016 to 2026.

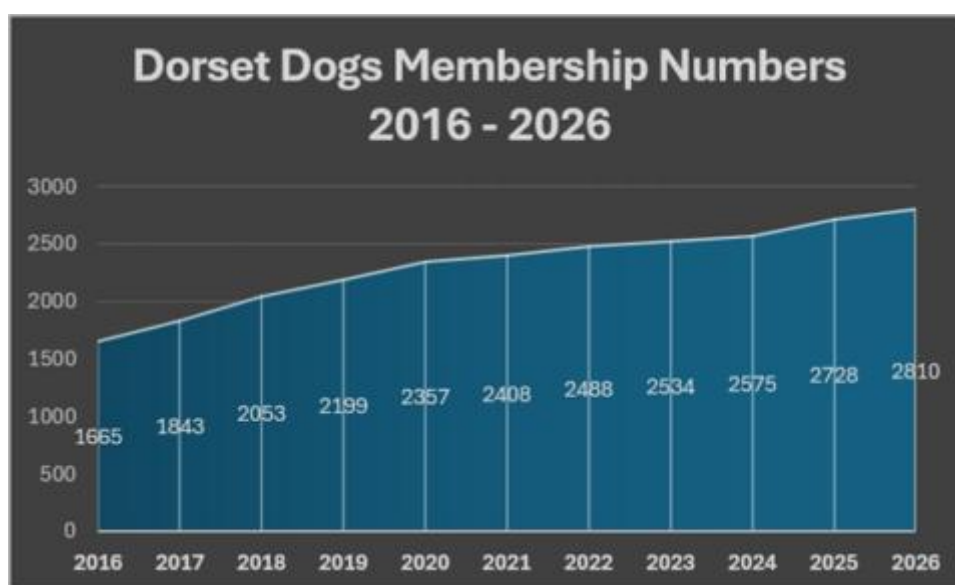


Figure 6

- The Professional Dog Walkers' Charter continues to be well received, with nearly 50 businesses signed up. The Charter references industry guidance and best practice, alongside a commitment to follow the Doggy Do Code, to provide a standard mark for dog owners looking to find a responsible dog walker. Following a meeting with Professional Dog Walkers (PDW) signed up to the Charter, a list of ten tips was developed for dog owners on what to look for when choosing a dog walker. The aim being to raise awareness and guide dog owners to choose reputable walkers. Two leaflets promoting the Charter, one for PDW and one for dog owners were also created.

- The K9 Firewise Patrol, a joint initiative with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service celebrated five seasons of helping to keep our heathlands, the community and wildlife safe from the effects of wildfires. The voluntary scheme was introduced in 2021, asking the Dorset Dogs community to help observe what's happening on our heathlands and reporting any suspicious behaviour directly to the emergency services, recording 1288 patrols from inception to the end period of this report. A long and short promotional video was produced.



- The Summer Campaign ran again this year to promote responsible dog ownership to visitors to Dorset, a series of 5 posters, encouraging visitors to follow the Doggy Do Code and target areas with high dog walking visitor numbers during the summer. This was shared with partners and delivered to campsites across the Purbeck area.
- SCCAMP (Southern Counties Canine Access Management Partnership) a partnership formed at the end of 2020 between Dorset Dogs, Devon Loves Dogs, Heathland Hounds, Forestry England, New Forest National Park, South Downs National Park and Bird Aware Solent continue to meet regularly to share best practice with new organisations joining.
- A third version of the 'Enjoying Dorset with your Dog' map and leaflet was developed and launched in early 2026. The map highlights alternative off lead walking sites and links to the interactive map on the Dorset Dogs website.



Supporting Partners:

- Providing continued onsite engagement with pit-stops and park and patrol activities at 60 sites across the BCP and DC Council areas.
- The approach to Ground Nesting Bird season was reviewed at DHP Delivery Group Meeting with new signage agreed then designed and delivered: 76 banners provided to partners.
- The team assisted with reptile rescue post wildfire events
- Guidance and advice was provided to partners including updates to leaflets and site signage
- Continued work with DC and BCP Heathland Mitigation Officers to promote SANGs and provide guidance e.g. enclosed training areas and dog dips
- Guidance and advice provided to partner park sites e.g. Queens Park, Alexandra Park
- Continued attendance and representation at DPARC.
- Additional work on parasiticides, best practice on water access and water safety
- Continued collaboration with Bird and Recreation Initiative



Dorset Dogs Banner used during bird nesting season

Delivering and Sharing Best Practice:

- The project contributed to the RENEW Project's Paws for Thought initiative, with Dorset Dogs highlighted as an example of effective practice in encouraging environmentally responsible dog walking.
- Following the publication of the RENEW report, Dorset Dogs hosted a seminar on managing dogs in the countryside, bringing together experts and practitioners to explore approaches to balancing the needs of people, dogs and the environment. Feedback demonstrated increased awareness and confidence among attendees in applying new ideas and approaches.
- The project's expertise was further recognised through invitations to present at national industry events and contribute to discussions with organisations including Natural England and the All-Party Parliamentary Dog Advisory Welfare Group. In addition, Dorset Dogs received an invitation to attend Crufts 2026, providing an opportunity to promote wildlife-friendly dog walking and responsible dog ownership to a national audience.
- These activities have strengthened Dorset Dogs' reputation as a leader in responsible access and behaviour change, helping to share learning and influence best practice beyond Dorset.



Dorset Dogs team engaging at crufts



Dorset Dogs Staff at SCCAMP group meeting

Objectives of communications and campaigns:

- Provide single point of contact for partnership communications.
- Develop and deliver key messages through a range of media.
- Maintain and develop the Dorset heaths website working with the DHP team and partners as an up-to-date engagement tool.
- Build and develop links with other mitigation delivering bodies.
- Develop strategic campaigns on behalf of partners.

Communications and Campaigns Delivery

Communications and campaigns are delivered by 1 full time Project Support Officer and 1 full time Campaigns Officer.

- Heathland Life newsletter - 2 newsletters providing information on events and heathland projects and staff were distributed to all BCP and DC Councillors and DHP Partners.
- Engagement through website and social media - social media channels continued to be used alongside the DHP website to promote and disseminate messages under the Dorset Heaths name. DHP run a Dorset Heaths Facebook, Instagram and YouTube platforms. The team provide a range of articles and posts that cover heathland plants and wildlife, campaign information, fires, and other pressure related stories.

Analytics For Dorset Heaths social media (1st April 2025 -31st March 2026):

- Facebook: 101,076 total post reach.
- Instagram: 2,375 total accounts engaged.
- Website: 1,492 individual user sessions

The Facebook post reach increased by over 50% in comparison to the previous year. Instagram almost doubled the number of accounts reached. This is due to high interest in August 2025 which peaked at 54,810, this was especially around videos and posts relating to the heathland fires.

Instagram figures fell slightly and website engagements also fell again during this period.

Heath Week

Objective: Increase awareness and appreciation of Dorset's heathland habitats through community engagement, education and partnership-led events, encouraging visitors to value and help protect these internationally important landscapes.

- Heath Week 2025 was delivered 28th July-3rd August 2025 providing a programme of activities designed to connect people with Dorset's unique heathland environment. The week combined guided walks, wildlife experiences, family activities and educational events to showcase the rich biodiversity of heathland habitats and promote responsible site use.
- Activities were delivered across a range of partner sites and offered opportunities for participants to learn about key species, habitat management and the conservation challenges facing Dorset's heathlands. Events were designed to engage a broad audience, encouraging both residents and visitors to develop a greater understanding of the wildlife and cultural importance of these special landscapes. 189 people were engaged with across the week by the DHP team.
- Digital communications played a key role in extending the reach of the campaign, with social media content used to promote events, share wildlife highlights and reinforce key conservation messages throughout the week. This activity helped engage audiences beyond those attending events in person and supported wider awareness-raising objectives. Heath week related posts on Facebook had 4,371 views and on Instagram a reach of 1,732 accounts.
- Heath Week also provided valuable opportunities to strengthen partnership working, with organisations collaborating to deliver a coordinated programme of engagement activities across the region. By combining public events, educational content and positive conservation messaging, the campaign helped foster a stronger connection between local communities and their heathland environment, encouraging long-term support for the protection and conservation of Dorset's heathlands.



Heath Week social media posts

Bike Trails Dorset

Objective: To reduce the impact of mountain biking on sensitive heathland habitats by encouraging the use of authorised trail riding locations.



Bike Trails Dorset leaflet

- Following research undertaken in the previous year, Dorset Heaths Partnership adopted a more audience-focused approach, working directly with local bike shops and the cycling community to identify practical ways of engaging riders. Feedback highlighted a demand for clear information on legitimate trail riding opportunities, leading to the production of a dedicated Bike Trails Dorset leaflet promoting approved riding locations.
- To further support the campaign, a dedicated trail-riding webpage was developed, supported by QR-coded business cards distributed through bike shops and events. The webpage provides information on authorised riding locations, promotes cycling partners and reinforces responsible riding messages. Recognising the limited number of bike parks within Dorset, the resource also highlights suitable facilities in neighbouring areas.
- During the year, 600 leaflets were distributed, and valuable relationships were established with local cycling businesses and riders, creating opportunities for ongoing engagement and partnership working.



Bike Trails web page on Dorset Heaths Partnership website

New Homeowners Pack

Objective: Increase awareness of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) among new residents and encourage responsible recreational use of Dorset's natural environment.



Homeowner leaflet

A new homeowner information leaflet was developed to provide clear and accessible information on local greenspaces available for recreation. The resource is intended for distribution to new homes across Dorset, including properties developed within the last five years, helping residents discover alternative sites for walking and outdoor activities while reducing recreational pressure on protected heathland habitats.

The design was developed in collaboration with a focus group to ensure the leaflet was visually engaging, easy to understand and effective in communicating key messages. The resulting resource provides a simple introduction to Dorset's alternative greenspaces and supports wider recreational mitigation objectives.



Love Your Heath

Objective: Increase awareness of Dorset's heathland wildlife and habitats, encouraging local communities to value, protect and take pride in their local heathlands through positive engagement and education.



Image of photographic display boards

- The Love Your Heath campaign focused on building stronger connections between local communities and their nearby heathland sites by increasing awareness of the wildlife and conservation work taking place on these nationally and internationally important landscapes. The campaign sought to reach local audiences through trusted community networks, including schools, community hubs, social media channels and existing relationships with site rangers.
- During the year, Bourne Valley was selected as the pilot community for targeted engagement activity. Working closely with BCP ranger Bryony Jenner, opportunities were identified to link community engagement with planned habitat restoration projects and wildlife survey work. Discussions explored ways in which local schools could participate in these activities, providing opportunities for young people to learn about their local environment as part of their curriculum. While schools have yet to confirm involvement, the Education Team will continue to develop these relationships and pursue future opportunities for participation.
- A second strand of the campaign involved the development of a mobile photographic exhibition designed to engage audiences in a variety of community settings, including schools, festivals and community centres. The exhibition will showcase striking wildlife imagery alongside accessible and engaging facts about key heathland species, helping to inspire interest and appreciation among local residents. The project has benefited from strong support from partner organisations, who have generously contributed high-quality images to support the exhibition and its educational objectives.



Images of photographic display boards



Anti Arson Campaign

Objective: Reduce incidents of arson on Dorset's heathlands.

- Research was undertaken in collaboration with DWFRS to explore current evidence and best practice relating to heathland arson. A review of available studies highlighted a limited evidence base and identified that directly targeting potential offenders was unlikely to be an effective approach.
- As a result a community-focused strategy was developed centred on empowering local residents to play an active role in protecting their nearby heathlands. Following any suspected fire-setting incidents, tailored communications will be issued to affected communities, encouraging increased vigilance, site presence and the reporting of suspicious activity through established channels.
- Working closely with DWFRS communications colleagues, the Partnership has developed locality-specific messaging designed to support community ownership, strengthen informal site monitoring and promote positive peer influence. This approach aims to build resilience within local communities and contribute to the long-term reduction of arson-related incidents across Dorset's protected heathland sites.

Anti-Social Behaviour Reporting

Objective: To improve the reporting of anti-social behaviour by providing clear, accessible information that enables visitors to quickly report incidents to the appropriate agencies.

- The Partnership worked collaboratively with key partners, including DWFRS and the police, to review existing reporting mechanisms and identify the most effective ways of communicating them to site visitors.
- Initial plans included the development of supporting information and visual materials to help the public understand how and where to report incidents of anti-social behaviour, particularly those affecting protected heathland sites. However, discussions with the DWFRS communications team identified that similar work was already underway within the organisation.
- To avoid duplication and ensure consistency of messaging, it was agreed that DWFRS would lead on the development and delivery of these communications. The Partnership will continue to support this work through ongoing collaboration with partner organisations, helping to promote clear reporting pathways and encourage responsible site use.

BBQ Campaign

Objective: Reduce the risk of wildfires caused by disposable barbecues and raise awareness of responsible outdoor recreation near Dorset's protected heathland and woodland sites.

- Dorset Heaths Partnership continued to support the BBQ Campaign in collaboration with Litter Free Dorset and DWFRS, promoting consistent wildfire prevention messaging across partner channels. The campaign again adopted the hashtag #BringAPicnicNotABBBQ, reinforcing a shared approach to public engagement and awareness raising.
- To support visitors staying close to protected heathland and forest sites, wardens distributed campaign posters and postcards to 34 local campsites. This activity not only extended the reach of wildfire prevention messages but also helped strengthen relationships with campsite operators, fostering valuable partnership networks and communication channels.
- The campaign generated significant public engagement during the year. A total of 1,837 postcards were distributed through participating campsites, while social media activity using #BringAPicnicNotABBBQ achieved almost 130,000 views and interactions. Through a combination of targeted communications, partnership working and on-the-ground engagement, the campaign helped raise awareness of wildfire risks and encourage safer visitor behaviour across Dorset's protected landscapes.
- As in previous years BBQ banners were again used and were displayed at 30 key locations across partner sites to reinforce the messaging.



BBQ Campaign postcard



BBQ banner used across heathland sites

Objectives of Firewise:

- Raise awareness of how to make homes and communities more resilient to wildfire, raising awareness of the risk to homes close to heathlands and forest from embers.
- Encourage communities to learn more about wildfire, the consequences of wildfire and the landscapes adjacent to their homes.
- Create a network of Firewise Communities that can support each other.
- Promote Firewise messages nationally with other interested organisations.



Firewise Delivery:

The Firewise project is delivered by the Firewise Assistant working 14.8 hours per week.

- During this time, the delivery of the Firewise project was affected by the ill health of the Firewise Assistant. To ensure continuity of key objectives and maintain progress against priority activities, elements of the role and work programme were adapted and incorporated into the responsibilities of the Campaigns Officer while management of the K9 Firewise Volunteers has moved to Dorset Dogs.
- This revised approach enabled essential project delivery to continue, particularly in relation to community communications, campaign development and partnership working. Priorities were reviewed and resources directed towards activities that would achieve the greatest impact, while some planned work was revised or deferred where appropriate.
- Despite the challenges presented by reduced staffing capacity, the project continued to deliver key outcomes through a flexible and collaborative approach.



Holt Heath August 2025



- During the year, work continued with communities located close to heathland sites with historically high numbers of fire incidents. Engagement was focused on key local contacts who could act as trusted community representatives, helping to share information, raise awareness of wildfire risks and promote responsible behaviour within their local areas. By building these relationships and providing timely information and guidance, community contacts are able to cascade important messages through existing local networks, increasing the reach and effectiveness of fire prevention communications.

Community contacts have been set up in the following areas:

- Turbary Common
- Avon Heath
- Bourne Valley
- Canford Heath
- Upton Heath
- Holt Heath
- Ferndown/Parley/Trickett's Cross

Additionally, information was regularly promoted through community Facebook groups, including:

- Wareham Community Group
- Puddletown Community
- My Ferndown



Amber wildfire alert graphics

- Wildfire alerts and advice went out to our groups and to the community Facebook pages using the hashtag #FirewiseUK throughout the year. These reached a total of 59,145 on social media, plus all the residents reached via the email and other delivery systems some of them have in place, each time they were posted.
- 3 articles were submitted to the Village Voices newsletter for the Holt area, reaching approximately 430 households each time.
- Attended the Holt Commoners Association meeting at Holtwood, along with the NT, Group Manager Shaun Milton from DWFRS and Vikki Slade MP. This was to discuss the fire on Holt Heath and how we can move forward and improve things.
- 80 people were engaged with and given a Firewise leaflet and evacuation checklist fridge magnet. 30 further fridge magnets were given to Cllr Duncan Sowry-House for the Upton Firewise group.



The Firewise leaflet and fridge magnet



64 target schools across the 2 councils.

Target schools Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Primary:

Heathlands Primary
Kingsleigh Primary
Christ The King
Elm Academy - Leaf
Kinson Primary
Winton Primary School
Stourfield Infant School
Muscliff Primary School
Hamworthy Park Junior
Broadstone First
Canford Heath Junior
Merley First
Manorside Primary
Talbot Primary
Bishop Aldhelms Primary
Haymoor Junior
Upton Junior
Highcliffe Primary
Springdale First (Broadstone)
Ad Astra Infant School (Poole)
Bearwood Primary (Bournemouth)
Winchelsea School (Poole)
St Joseph's Catholic Primary (Poole)
St Mary's Catholic Primary (Poole)
Twyham Primary School (Christchurch)
Mudford Junior School
Turlin Moor/ Bayside Academy

Secondary:

Bourne Academy
Oak Academy - Leaf
Glenmoor Academy
Winton Academy
Livingstone Academy
Broadstone Middle
Carter Community
St Aldhelms Academy
Magna Academy
Highcliffe Comprehensive
The Grange
Twyham
Corfe Hills School (Broadstone)
Poole Grammar (Poole)



Students taking part in activities at Hengistbury Head

Target schools Dorset Council

Primary:

Sandford Primary
Bovington Primary
Bere Regis Primary
Stobrough Primary
Corfe Castle Primary
Damers First School
Henbury First (Corfe Mullen)
Rushcombe First (Corfe Mullen)
Parley First (West Parley)
Ferndown First
Oakhurst Community (West Moors)
St Mary's CE First (West Moors)
St Ives First (Ringwood)
Three Legged Cross First
Trinity C of E VA First (Verwood)
Hillside Community First (Verwood)

Secondary:

Ferndown Middle
Lockyers Middle
West Moors Middle
Lychett Minster
The Purbeck
Ferndown Upper
Emmanuel Middle School



Students at Hengistbury Head