

# ANNUAL REPORT 23/24



POKESDOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BOURNEMOUTH





EM J, SOPHIE, EMMA, EIMEAR AND DOUGIE THE DOG

Litter Free Dorset – land, coast and sea is a strategic approach to creating better quality local environments for everyone in Dorset, exploring and realising the social, economic and environmental benefits of reducing the impacts of litter in the county’s towns, beaches and open spaces.

We focus on reducing litter and waste at source as well as maintaining Dorset’s excellent bathing water quality.

This report will outline how Litter Free Dorset’s objectives have been met this last year and evidence how collaborative working is continuing to create a partnership with impact, legacy, and sustainability.

This year has been another busy one for us, with a heightened focus on advancing up the waste hierarchy to promote reuse initiatives – this has been evident in our ‘refill’ activities at events and the new ‘Dorset Cup’ scheme.

We have proudly contributed to the broader ‘Nature Recovery Dorset’ movement through our Sustainable Business Award and ‘Love Your Verge’ campaign. Improving pride of place with the wider community has been another key theme with one of this year’s highlights being the ‘Thyme Out’ garden launch event on Portland.

A heartfelt thank you to all our partners: to those who brave the elements to clean our beaches each week, to those who always join our forum meetings and to everyone in between.

Thank you.



DAVE TAYLOR - WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND MARINE LITTER PROJECT

Since 2020 Litter Free Dorset have been working across the 38 different bathing waters alongside community groups to reduce litter and enhance water quality in Dorset. Examples of interventions include refill points, community art, improved signage, equipment for community groups, crab line recycling schemes and toy libraries. All these projects have been funded by Wessex Water.

This year we have worked with communities within Bournemouth and Christchurch to reduce litter at source and improve bathing water quality.

In the next few pages, we explore some highlights...

## THE DORSET CUP

We launched The Dorset Cup scheme in Southbourne in August, a new initiative to reduce single-use coffee cups and promote reuse. The scheme's simplicity is its strength: customers can borrow a cup from any of the participating cafés, enjoy their coffee, and then return the cup to any café within the Dorset Cup network.

The aim is to make it easier and more convenient for coffee lovers to opt for a reusable cup, without the hassle of remembering to bring their own. To date we have five partner cafes and 26 members, with members logging their cup usage on our website so that we can track the frequency of use and map the most popular routes.



EMMA - WILD & GINGER CAFE



## SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT

For this year's bathing water delivery work, we wanted to expand our reach beyond the beach itself to address some of the wider factors that can have an impact on beach cleanliness and water quality. To this end, we reached out to several local primary schools near a bathing water, with a view to collaborating on rainwater harvesting projects.

Storing rainwater during periods of heavy rain and then releasing it gradually back into the environment can help to relieve pressure on the surface water drainage system and reduce the occurrence of discharges from storm overflows. We are delighted to be working with Pokesdown Primary School (near Fisherman's Walk) and St Katherine's Primary School in Southbourne (near Hengistbury Head), to install water butts on the school grounds so that students can harvest rainwater to be used for growing projects. These schemes will see water being diverted from surface water drains, which can have a positive impact on the nearby bathing water quality. Students from each school have also attended our 'Water Savers' workshop, highlighting the need to conserve and store water, as well as a Nurdle Hunt on Solent Beach (Hengistbury Head).



This Summer, Litter Free Dorset and Dorset Coast Forum asked residents and visitors to Dorset how they spend their time at beaches across Dorset. A total of 698 people participated in the survey, including 341 water users who marked their water entry points on our map. The aim of our survey was to find out which beaches people were travelling to, which water sports were most popular and where people were entering the water. We also wanted to gather insights on people's perceptions of litter and water cleanliness at their local beaches.

## Key Findings:

- Weymouth and Studland are the most visited beaches. Other frequently visited beaches include West Bay, Weymouth Lodmoor, and Swanage Central.
- The most common litter items are plastic wrappers and bottles. Cigarette butts, vapes, and dog poo are also prevalent
- 65% of beach users are concerned about water quality, but only 32% check it before visiting.
- Most people use the beach throughout the year, not just during the bathing water season.
- Walking and swimming are the top activities, with social gatherings and picnics also popular.
- 115 different groups use Dorset beaches, with activities ranging from swimming to sailing.
- A significant majority (461 respondents) do not check water quality before visiting. Among those who do, the SAS App is the most popular method.



THYME OUT GARDEN PORTLAND - POLYTUNNEL

The 'Reconnecting with Nature Spaces' project in Dorset aims to enhance health, well-being, and access to nature in specific outdoor areas, particularly benefiting residents with learning disabilities or dementia. The project achieves this by improving access, installing adapted furniture, and enhancing existing facilities.

For our project in Portland, we worked with Muntsey's Day Service to create a wonderful community garden hub in an unused boat yard. The boat yard was empty except for a few dead shrubs. We installed a 7x4 metre polytunnel as well as 14 accessible raised beds of various heights as well as a shed to store tools and potting benches for outdoor learning. The group have even used the next-door leisure centres roof to collect rainwater.

The celebration event which took place this spring saw a wide range of the community attend to enjoy the space including a group of asylum seekers. There are future plans including an outdoor cinema.

[LINK TO VIDEO FROM THE DAY CENTRE >>](#)



THYME OUT GARDEN PORTLAND - MURAL



## QUEEN MOTHER GARDEN SHAFTESBURY

We also completed a wonderful project in Shaftesbury in the Queen Mother Garden as part of the Reconnecting with Nature Spaces project. The garden has transformed with bespoke friendship benches, nature poems, seasonal information boards and an amazing bug hotel made by the students at Shaftesbury School. It was a great community project with town council working with volunteers from Sustainable Shaftesbury, Shaftesbury Abbey, Shaftesbury Snowflakes, The Blackmore Vale Partnership, Shaftesbury in Bloom and the local school to create a wonderful green space for the community to connect with nature.

At Litter Free Dorset, we believe that caring for a place inspires others to do the same. To effectively reduce litter, we recognise the importance of considering the bigger picture and adopting an integrated approach. This means not only improving spaces but also supporting the broader community.

# LOVE YOUR VERGE

The Love Your Verge campaign is a countywide collaboration between the council's Greenspace Service and Litter Free Dorset. The verges in Dorset host a wide range of wildlife and need protecting. The campaign aims to promote the Dorset Council verge management techniques used to encourage roadside biodiversity while reducing incidents of littering in our county. This year, we gave the signs a refresh with a new slogan 'making space with nature' this links the campaign to the wider 'nature recovery' movement.

Nature Recovery Dorset is a movement to restore, enhance and connect spaces for nature in our county. It has been collectively created to help bring together and drive forward action to recover nature and create a more wildlife-rich county.

A new Local Nature Recovery Strategy is being created in Dorset to identify the best opportunities to restore, grow and connect nature across the county.







## POSTER COMPETITION

In May, we visited Symonds Primary School with Russell Goff from the Dorset Council Greenspace team to talk about making space for wildlife in our communities as part of our Love Your Verge campaign. It was incredibly inspiring to talk to the children and hear all the fascinating facts they know about bees and pollinators.

Before leaving, we tasked the class with creating their own posters to tell people that a space is being managed for wildlife and we were blown away by the wonderful posters they designed. In August, we exhibited all the children's artwork in the reception of County Hall in Dorchester to celebrate the Love Your Verge campaign. Thank you to everyone at Symonds Primary for having us and for the fantastic posters.





## SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK

Our Sustainable Business Network started in January 2023, and I'm delighted to say we now have over 150 business members across Dorset.

This summer, our focus for the network was nature recovery. No matter what size of business, we wanted to encourage every business to get involved in making changes to help nature thrive in Dorset!

Businesses who make small but impactful changes in their business will win a Sustainable Business Award.

We have over 20 nature recovery actions for businesses to complete, here's some examples:

- Hang some hanging baskets
- Invest in a few office plants
- Always choose peat free compost
- Choose never to use chemicals in your outdoor space
- Have an outdoor seating area for staff to spend time outdoors

As of September 2024, we have awarded 50 local businesses who have made changes for nature in how they run their business.



This Summer we have been encouraging everyone to ditch the disposable BBQs and opt for picnics instead. We have partnered with Dorset Heaths to refresh our animation for social media and installed artwork on buses in Dorset with our campaign artwork.

## GREAT DORSET BEACH CLEAN

The Great Dorset Beach Clean took place Saturday 6th- Sunday 7th April. Although it was a windy weekend, over 200 volunteers persevered to clean up nine locations across the Dorset coastline. The event got a lot of press coverage, including a segment on BBC South Today 6 o'clock news.

We have also supported 18 community litter picks this year by providing equipment and assisting with the organisation of their clean up. These events were led by community groups, businesses, organisations, and students bringing together over 300 volunteers who helped clean up our streets and beaches.



BEACH CLEAN IN KIMMERIDGE

*“On behalf of everyone at Afro\*disiac Live Radio and the Bournemouth Reggae Weekender team, I want to express our deepest gratitude for your generous support. Thanks to you and Litter Free Dorset, this year's event was a tremendous success”.*

*Ray - Bournemouth Reggae Weekender*

*“The presence of Litter Free Dorset at Chesil Rocks was both welcome and important, as it encouraged and facilitated those present to act in a sustainable way and develop positive habits and behaviour”.*

*Tim - Chesil Rocks*

## TAPPY HOUR SUCCESS

SUPPORTING LOCAL EVENTS TO PROMOTE REFILL

This summer, we participated in two major events: Chesil Rocks and the Bournemouth Reggae Weekender, where we focused on promoting reducing single-use plastic.

### Chesil Rocks

At the Chesil Rocks festival, we offered free tap water refills, encouraging attendees to bring their own reusable water bottles. For those without bottles, we provided cups to borrow, ensuring there were no barriers to accessing free water and reducing the need to purchase single-use plastic bottles. Alongside the water station, we introduced our Water Savers Game, which educated festival-goers on practical ways to reduce water consumption at home.

### Bournemouth Reggae Weekender

Later in the summer, we collaborated with Bournemouth Water at the Bournemouth Reggae Weekender, a three-day celebration of Afro-Caribbean culture. We set up the event's first free tap water station, which was a major success. Over 800 attendees refilled their bottles and cups, significantly reducing the use of single-use plastic bottles. We are hopeful that this initiative will inspire the event organisers to implement further sustainability measures for future festivals.

Next Summer, we would like to expand our reach and attend more events offering free tap water to all.



Thank you to everyone who has joined the in-person forum meetings over the last year, moving forward we will have a mixture of in-person and online meetings. One of the highlights of this year, was our trip to the Anerobic Digester in Piddlehinton where we learnt how our food waste in the Dorset Council area is recycled. We will continue to email monthly updates to Forum members to ensure we keep our partners updated on current projects, campaigns, funding opportunities and upcoming events.

If you would like to join our forum please contact:  
[litterfreedorset@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:litterfreedorset@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

ANEROBIC DIGESTOR SITE VISIT

## LOOKING FORWARD

We are currently seeking funding and planning projects for 2025. Our aspirations include working up stream within river catchments to improve water quality, continuing to work with communities to improve pride and place as well as expand our school engagement.

We are also planning some specific campaigns which will look at issues such as dog fouling and angling litter.

If you would like to work with us on a project do get in touch with one of the team.

## THANK YOU,

LITTER FREE DORSET TEAM  
SOPHIE, EMMA, EIMEAR & EM J



TRIP ON THE CHESIL FLEET EXPLORER