

# The Dorset Heaths Partnership

*For People | For Wildlife | Forever*



The Dorset Heaths Partnership is made up of 10 organisations working together to protect and enhance the Dorset heathlands.



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Our aim is to alleviate urban pressures on the Dorset heathlands brought about by new residential development in the area.

This is achieved with a combination of wardening, an inclusive education programme, access management, fire risk assessment and habitat management.

There are several strands of monitoring to establish baseline data and to gauge success of work and projects.

A core team of staff is funded jointly from developer contributions collected by each Local Planning Authority from development within 5km of a heathland site. Dorset Council employs the team on behalf of the partnership.

## The Partners:



amphibian and reptile  
conservation



Forestry England

# What we do



Our mitigation delivery largely consists of 6 main strands:

- **Wardening** - full-time and seasonal wardens out on site sharing knowledge and promoting responsible use of our outdoor spaces.
- **Education** - delivering in-school and on-site sessions covering topics such as heath fires, wildlife conservation and anti-social behaviour.
- **Dorset Dogs** - championing wildlife-friendly happy, healthy dogs in the countryside.
- **Firewise UK** - tackling the emerging threat of wildfire in the UK, utilising research by the world's leading fire experts on ignition of homes from wildfire.
- **Monitoring** - collecting data and feeding it back to the partners to form the yearly monitoring reports, gauging the effectiveness of the mitigation delivery.

# Why we do it



Nearly a third of Dorset's internationally important heathland is situated in the urban areas of south east Dorset, with nearly half a million people living nearby. These heathlands experience particular problems.

Today there are about 8500 hectares of heathland left in Dorset. The majority of them are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and above, such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Protecting and managing these sites is a shared responsibility with landowners, managers, Natural England and site users.

Lowland heathland is now rarer on the planet than tropical rainforest.

Heathlands are home to a fantastic mixture of wildlife. The poor soils and historic land use have led to a low-growing, shrub dominated habitat. This supports a unique mixture of plants, birds, reptiles and invertebrates, some of which are extremely rare.



# Wardening

The wardening team consists of a year-round, part-time warden and 2 full-time seasonal wardens from April to September. The wardens patrol a total of 20 sites on behalf of the partners across the Dorset Council area. Their main focus is to provide a presence on heathland sites to encourage appropriate behaviour and signpost users to alternative open spaces. This includes patrols, educational visits and on-site activities or events. In addition to this, the wardens attend community events to promote responsible use of heathlands and alternative open spaces. The team also works closely with Dorset Police and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service to provide assistance in the event of a fire or other incident on the heathland.



# Education

Education forms a key part of our work and we offer unique experimental learning experiences both on the heathland and in schools for all primary and secondary key stages linked to the National Curriculum.

We aim to increase awareness of the importance of heathlands for their wildlife and biodiversity and the consequences of fires on them.

By delivering directly to the local young people living near to our heathlands we aim to instil a sense of ownership, pride and awareness of the habitat and pressures the heaths face and what we can all do to help.



# Education

Schools across the project area can book free sessions delivered in the classroom, in school grounds or on local heathland sites delivered by one of our education team.

The sessions for younger children range from sensory heathland exploration, heathland plants and animal identification, heath exploration and expressive art.

For older students we provide sessions which include geographical skills, investigating heathland ecosystems and our Arson Courtroom Drama which is an interactive arson awareness session developed alongside our partners at Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, to highlight the impact of wildfire on heathlands.





# Dorset Dogs Love Dogs...Love Nature



Dorset Dogs champions positive management for dogs in town, coast and countryside, and promotes responsible dog ownership.

We champion access for dog walkers across Dorset's coast and countryside and offer advice and feedback for people who manage land where people walk, on best practice canine access management. We promote responsible dog ownership through our Doggy Do Code to help dog owners enjoy happy, healthy stress free walks without causing disturbance to habitat, wildlife or other visitors.

# Dorset Dogs



Dorset Dogs provides free resources including online information, videos, leaflets and maps. Activities and events include Pitstops, Guided Walkies, webinars and seminars. We also carry out survey work and consultancy, innovative projects and campaigns and other work with dog owners, dog and countryside organisations, charities and land managers.

- Dorset Dogs created the Doggy Do Code, with 5 key principles promoting responsible dog ownership, and runs a free membership scheme for everyone signing up to it. Doggy Do Code signs are installed across heathlands and greenspaces along with our 'Pawprint Roundels' and seasonal banners.

## Doggy Do Code

Take only memories...leave only paw-prints



**Do prevent your dog from chasing wildlife & farm animals**



**Do follow requests on signs**



**Do respect other visitors & keep your dog in sight**



**Do bag it & bin it**



**Do protect nesting birds on heaths, downs & wetlands: keep to paths and use a short lead Feb - August**



**...Do join Dorset Dogs & enjoy Dorset with your dog!**

Dorset Dogs champions positive management for dogs in town, coast & countryside and promotes responsible dog ownership. **Join us free at:**

[www.dorsetdogs.org.uk](http://www.dorsetdogs.org.uk)



# What we do



- Community engagement: we deliver 'Pitstops' (an information pop up) across 60 sites engaging with dog walkers. We also attend other events including those run by our partners, dog and countryside organisations.
- Working in Partnership: together with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and supported by Firewise UK, we set up the K9 Firewise Patrol, a wildfire prevention scheme. We also work with the Bird And Recreation Initiative raising awareness of overwintering birds.



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@dorsetdogs



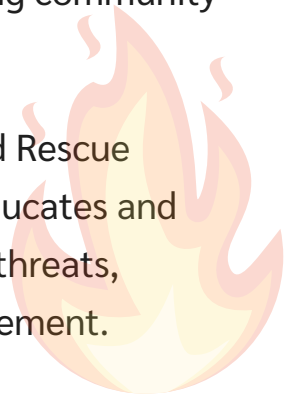
Photo credit: DWFRS

Wildfires are occurring now in the UK.

Firewise has been set up in response to the emerging threat of wildfires to our communities here in Britain.

Firewise Communities is an international programme based on research by the world's leading fire experts on ignition of homes from wildfire. It promotes community collaboration to mitigate wildfire risks through practical measures around homes and gardens, fostering community spirit and responsibility.

In partnership with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) and our partners, Firewise educates and prepares vulnerable communities for wildfire threats, building resilience through community engagement.





# What we do



- Speaking to groups and the public at events throughout the year helps us engage directly with the communities who may be at risk from wildfire.
- We work closely with DWFRS, the Police and our partners within the Dorset Heaths Partnership. This helps us deliver our messaging, coming together in the event of a wildfire.
- K9 Firewise Patrol is a joint project between DWFRS, Dorset Dogs and Firewise. Volunteers regularly walk on the heath with their dogs looking out for any signs of fire or suspicious behaviour that may link to wildfires.



# The threat of wildfire



Wildfire is happening here in the UK with increasing frequency. As the global climate warms up, so the threat becomes greater.

Our heathlands, woodlands and homes are at risk and every year there are numerous wildfires in Dorset. The devastation caused to precious habitat and wildlife alone can be catastrophic. We aim to instil an understanding of this and help communities become as prepared and resilient as they can be.



[firewiseuk@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:firewiseuk@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)



[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)



# Monitoring



Monitoring identifies at-risk heaths from urban pressure, guides mitigation efforts, establishes baseline data for visitor use, and gauges opinions on heathlands. It supports ongoing assessment of the Dorset Heaths Partnership (DHP) mitigation delivery.

The monitoring team assists partners with recording wildlife and habitat information for sites within our area.

Monitoring of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGS) is established to inform delivery of and to demonstrate the SANG's functionality and use by local residents. We work with land owners and developers, using a combination of methods, to achieve this.

# Monitoring methods

- We maintain an incident database on the Dorset Explorer Geographic Information System that records damaging activities such as heath fires, motor vehicle trespass and ramp and den building.
- A network of automated visitor counting sensors have been established across the DHP area. The data is used to record numbers of visitors, and to identify trends of behaviour and site usage.
- Simultaneous (snap shot) car park counts are coordinated across all the identified heathland parking areas. The counts gather information on how many cars are at each location and provide a simple measure of use.
- Site user surveys are carried out to find out who visits the heaths, why, what they do, where they go and how and where they are travelling from, and their opinions of the sites.

All this information is collated into annual monitoring reports which can be accessed via our website.



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