

March
2017

State of Dorset

Natural and Historic Environment



Dorset County Council

Dorset's natural and historic environment makes a huge contribution to health and personal wellbeing.

Dorset's natural systems provide a wide range of essential goods (food, fuel, productive soil, clean air and water) and beneficial services (pollination, flood alleviation, climate regulation and tranquillity). These are taken for granted, but they need a combination of public, private and voluntary action to maintain them.

The contribution of our natural and historic environment to the economy is often overlooked.

The importance of our natural environment limits the locations available for new development including employment land and housing.

Big Numbers Box

15% Contribution from Environmental economy to regional GDP

5% Of all nationally protected ancient monuments are in Dorset

86% Lowland heath lost since 1800

90%

Of Dorset residents said that the environment was an important factor in their decision to live in Dorset.

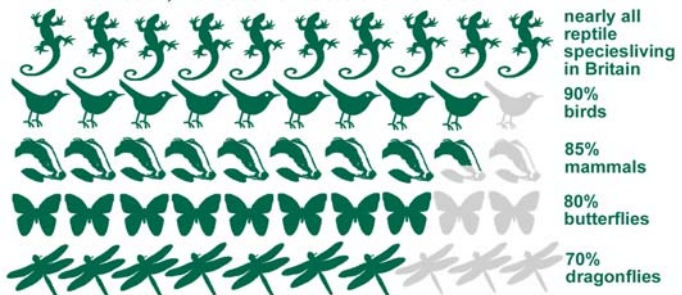
6% Of energy production from renewable sources

53% Of County covered by Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation

Box 1: The Natural Environment

- 90% of Dorset residents surveyed said the environment was an important, very important or crucial factor in their decision to live in Dorset. In addition, businesses report a demonstrable positive impact from both the Jurassic Coast and the AONB¹.
- Dorset contains part of England's only natural World Heritage Site and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, covering 53% of the county².
- Whilst making up only two per cent of the area of England, Dorset holds five per cent of its nationally protected ancient monuments. However, almost a quarter of these (24%) are 'at risk'³.
- All of the Dorset coast (excluding the town seafronts) is recognised in national or international designations for its unique landscape, scenic quality, wildlife and geological formations².

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole are home to...



Sources

1 'Dorset's Environmental Economy', Ash Futures for Dorset County Council, Dorset AONB, Jurassic Coast WHS, Dorset LNP, 2015

2 Dorset Databook 2011, Dorset County Council

3 Heritage at Risk register, Historic England, 2016

Box 2: Economy and wellbeing

- Dorset's environmental economy is worth between £0.9bn and £2.5bn per annum, about 8-10% of Dorset's overall economy. It also supports between 17,000 and 61,000 jobs in the economy¹.
- Since 1800, 86% of Dorset's lowland heath has been lost to farming, forestry or development⁴ and significant areas of Dorset are classified as 'Nitrate Vulnerable Zones' hinting at pressure on the water environment.
- 30% of the services provided by the natural environment are in decline while 60% of UK plant and animal species have declined over the last 50 years.
- Natural England (2009 report into their Walking the Way to Health Initiative) calculated that £2.1 billion of healthcare costs could be saved if everyone had access to green spaces⁵.

% Dorset covered by Nitrate Vulnerable Zones



Box 3: Energy

- Whilst CO² emissions in Dorset are falling, in line with the government's targets for 2020⁶, further reductions are required to meet tougher emission targets for 2050⁷. The Paris Agreement aims to limit warming to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.
- Renewable energy production has increased in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole from 0.95% of local energy consumption in February 2011 to 5.5% in March 2016. However, Dorset still lags behind Cornwall and Devon who continue to lead on renewable energy generation in the SW⁸.

Renewable energy production as % of all consumption



Why does it matter:

Not only does the environment make a contribution to our economy, but access to the environment contributes substantially to health and wellbeing and greater wellbeing contributes to higher productivity and economic gain.

The physical and mental health benefits of access to nature are well documented, as are the negative impacts of environmental inequality. Improving access to green infrastructure therefore offers the potential to extend these benefits, particularly in areas where access is poor.

Climate change will continue. National and international policies demand local action to mitigate and adapt to this change and the development of a greener, low-carbon economy will offer significant economic opportunities as well as environmental benefits.

Sources

4 Natural England/RSPB

5 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24806994>

6 UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2014, Department of Energy & Climate Change.

7 The Carbon Plan: Delivering our low carbon future, Department of Energy & Climate Change, 2011.

8 Renewable energy - A local progress report for England, Regen SW, 2016.