

**Report from Environmental Policy Working Party held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 - Climate Crisis Review**

At its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 Swanage Town Council declared a ‘Climate Crisis’ and seven resolutions were agreed.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress to date after 12 months from the Climate Crisis Declaration. While good progress has been seen, several key steps have been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

	<b>Swanage Town Council Resolution 16th September 2020</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
1.	Recognise that there is a serious climate crisis, and urge other councils, businesses, other organisations, and individuals to do likewise	A Climate Crisis was declared on 16th September 2019 by Swanage Town Council.	No further steps required.
2.	Commission a carbon footprint audit of its properties and ways of working, to report back to the full Council by March 2020	The authority undertook its own carbon audit using a tool supplied by Dorset Council. This was produced in February 2020 for the year of 2019, although was not presented to Full Council. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, steps were being implemented to update the carbon audit on a monthly basis. This will be reviewed and implemented during the winter of 2020.	Review carbon audit management system in winter 2020.
3.	Use its best endeavours to make Swanage Town Council carbon neutral by 2030	No work has been undertaken in this area due to the Covid-19 pandemic	Develop a carbon neutral action plan by end of 2020-21.
4.	Establish a working party to develop an Environmental Policy and Action Plan which will set out the steps towards achieving carbon neutrality. This will be presented to full Council for approval within six months of receipt of the carbon footprint audit	At the meeting of the Town Council on 24th February 2020 the following was agreed:  That the Town Council approves the draft Environmental Policy (attached below) and proceeds with consultation with local environmental groups, including Extinction Rebellion, subject to completion of the draft Environmental Action Plan.	Agree process to undertake a consultation around an action plan in next few months
5.	Regularly review progress towards delivering carbon neutrality, at intervals to be determined by Swanage Town Council’s Environmental Policy	No action taken to date	Set up a regular review process.

6.	Work with businesses, other organisations and residents, including Sustainable Swanage, Litter Free Purbeck and Love our Sea to deliver environmental improvements such as additional tree planting	The Town Council authorised spending of up to £16,000 for 2020-21 to pay for an officer to support Sustainable Swanage for two days a week to deliver environmental improvements across the town. This role is working well with partners, businesses, residents and other organisations to deliver a wide range of projects. Further information can be found here: <a href="https://www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/sustainable-swanage/">https://www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/sustainable-swanage/</a>	Continue to support the Sustainable Swanage Officer and ensure projects continue to be delivered.
7.	Call upon Dorset Council and other town and parish councils to join us in working towards carbon neutrality by 2030.	The Town Council has worked with many groups to encourage and support other councils to develop their environmental improvements.	Once a carbon neutrality action plan is established, ensure this is promoted to other councils

The Environment Working Party met on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and the following actions were identified:

No.	Action	Date Required
1.	Review the Council's current arrangement with the LASER energy consortium and consider options to move to a 'green' tariff	Review at next Working Party meeting on 14 <sup>th</sup> October
2.	Seek advice from Low Carbon Dorset (Dorset Council) and others as to the options available to the Town Council to reduce its Carbon emissions and consider at the next meeting how to engage with the community	Review at next Working Group meeting on 14 <sup>th</sup> October
3.	Develop a first draft Action Plan for the Environment Policy	Review at next Working Group meeting on 14 <sup>th</sup> October

Culvin Milmer  
 Visitor Services Manager and Business Development Officer  
 September 2020

# **Draft Swanage Town Council Environment Policy**

Swanage Town Council is committed to the continued development of a sustainable community, balancing and integrating economic, social and environmental components. Developing a more sustainable community will benefit present-day residents and build a community able to meet the increasing environmental challenges that will be faced as climate change impacts locally.

Swanage Town Council reiterates the 'Climate Crisis' motion that it adopted on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 which includes a recognition "that there is a serious climate crisis".

Swanage Town Council will ensure that environmental considerations are put at the heart of how we operate our functions and services and deal with stakeholders at all levels of our activities.

This policy covers premises directly managed by Swanage Town Council and includes council buildings, the beach, boat park and parks and gardens.

Our six policy aims are outlined below.

**Managing the Town Council in an environmentally sustainable manner**  
We shall ensure that sustainability is at the heart of how we manage the Town Council and its functions

**Encouraging, educating and embedding environmental best practice**  
We shall work with the community and other stakeholders to encourage environmental best practice

**Managing our built environment sustainably**  
We are directly responsible for both historic and modern buildings and infrastructure which will be managed sustainably

**Protecting local infrastructure**  
By working with the community and stakeholders we shall strive to protect and enhance local infrastructure in order to retain a vibrant and sustainable town

**Protecting and enhancing the natural environment**  
We are directly responsible for a wide range of natural environments and shall work to enhance these and look to support initiatives that enhance other natural areas within the town

**Supporting sustainable tourism**  
We shall support the town's tourism economy through the promotion of sustainable tourism

Swanage Town Council will achieve this policy through working with the community and the establishment of an Environmental Action Plan. This policy will be reviewed by the Town Council at least annually.

February 2020



## **Sustainable Swanage Progress Report**

The main work of the group in July and August has included working on the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) project, the plan for the Rabling Road Green and other greening projects. We have also had a successful Open Meeting on sustainable transport and have been discussing other new projects including community fridges. Many of the volunteers have been taking time out to be with family or concentrate on their businesses in the busy summer months but as we enter September we have restarted our regular group meetings.

### **Tree planting on the High Street**

We had a meeting with Steve Maros and Katie Black from Dorset Council in July to discuss the possibility of planting trees along the wide verge between the Swanage school and Emmanuel Church. They are supportive of this and Steve recommends Oak or Lime that would make an impressive focal point for people coming into Swanage. Subject to survey for underground services there could be space for up to 40 trees, but to plant over 2 years. Dorset Council can fund the first 10 and we would need to raise the remaining funds for the next 10 in year 1. We are hoping that this can happen in autumn of 2020.

### **Other greening projects**

We have some other tree planting projects that the group will be assisting with this season at local schools and churches and there are several other initiatives that have come out of the work done so far involving individuals from the community, 2 of which are detailed below:

- **Tree map of Swanage** – we have been approached by a resident to provide a map of the new tree plantings so people could go and see where they all were. We are planning to combine this with details of key established trees around the town that are notable and special to the town such as the cypress in Northbrook cemetery. We will be calling out for contributions to this map from the community.
- **Swift Conservation** – working with local Swift expert on recruiting volunteers to help monitor the resident swifts and create a nest box project to help provide and protect suitable nesting site for this vulnerable species.

### **Communications**

We will be having a team meeting next week and have a new volunteer to help with social media promotions. We have an article in Swanage Matters (Facebook page) and this autumn will be looking to put articles on other local newsletters. With the increase in projects we will be producing our own newsletter in September to make our regular update to our mailing list and website easier. The website will be getting new updates and we are planning a poster/leaflet to advertise the group.

We are planning a survey for the community to obtain their views on climate change and ecological crisis and to make suggestions on what could be done in the area to help address the issues we will face. We are able to use the Dorset Coast Forum website 'Have your say' which will also be used to consult on other local projects

<https://www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk/>.

### **Open meetings**

Our next zoom open meeting is planned for 22<sup>nd</sup> September and will be focussed on tree planting and 'greening' projects in the town for this year and we welcome people to come with their suggestions for new locations too. October's open meeting, it is planned will focus

on a discussion on sustainable tourism. We will open out to requests for other topics and have already had one for another meeting on local food producers following the success of our May meeting.

### **Purbeck Energy Group**

The group are working on the two initiatives: Energy Local Group and setting up 'solar streets', which is aimed at obtaining group discounts for solar panels on residential properties. The former project is underway but it is a longer process and may not begin until January. They have been investigating home insulation opportunities and we will be working with them to promote funding opportunities to the community.

### **Transport**

After a successful meeting with some excellent suggestions and support for a vision for improving access and safer options for cyclists and walkers we have several people keen to be involved in a group. Some of the first tasks we are looking into are an electric bike hire scheme in conjunction with the Durlston Ranger team and supporting smaller measures that could be taken to improve safety in certain areas. A more detailed update will come at a future meeting.

### **Swanage Downs Local Nature Reserve and Rabling Road Pocket Park**

Significant progress has been achieved in these two areas which are the subject of separate reports below.

### **Recommendation**

To note the update from Sustainable Swanage.

Sarah Spurling  
Sustainable Swanage Officer

September 2020

## To consider draft proposal for Rabling Green Pocket Park

### Introduction

At the Town Council meeting of 29th June 2020, officers were tasked with working up detailed plans around design, costs, and community engagement for the establishment of a 'pocket park' on the Rabling Road Green site.

### Description and Concept

The area has been designed with 4 main curved areas of longer grass with the idea to sow wildflowers or plant plug plants within these areas in the first year. Several species were observed on a site visit including birds foot trefoil, red clover and selfheal, other varieties may appear if mowing ceases in spring, this can be observed and surveyed in the first year. These areas can be mown in early spring and then again in late August/September with defined edges (see sample images below); this will not only enhance the appearance of the site but will provide a valuable resource for wildlife. Standard fruit trees can be planted within these areas with a few more scattered elsewhere, the design has allowed for 15 new trees. The trees can be mulched around the base to prevent competition from the grasses and help water retention.

The concept of the design is to provide an informal, low maintenance garden, with flowing, adaptable shapes that will provide pleasant areas for people to sit and relax in, picnic, meet friends or play games and can be used for educational purposes. There is a larger central open space to allow for games and small-scale community events such as produce stalls, seed and seedling swaps. The winding edges and paths will provide a more interesting route across the green and children will love moving around the many paths. The design has been made around existing trees and current use, without edges and formal entry points.

The addition of fruit trees to the site and the associated blossom will provide a valuable nectar source for pollinators and be aesthetically pleasing. A variety of species such as apple, pear and plum, can provide this successively over a couple of months. Trees will provide a more diverse structure and further habitat for birds and insects.

The plan does not include the formally managed area to the south or propose any changes to the existing trees already managed by the Town Council. However, we have discussed the area with the Town Council Operations team and talked about potential plants that would further benefit wildlife. Seating can be provided in the form of formal benches, logs or stones and there is potential to add other features such as information signs, bug and bird houses and maybe art features as the community garden develops.

### Tree Species

The planting plan contains one larger feature tree to complement the existing tree, the suggestion is an English walnut tree which will provide an interesting feature. There is also a group of three hazel trees included which can be coppiced at around 15 years old and will provide hazelnuts. The remaining 11 trees, it is proposed, could be made up a selection of fruit trees to suit all tastes and provide interest. It should include some local heritage varieties if possible. Suggestions include, Bramley apple, Bullace, Medlar, greengage, damson, two varieties of pear, plum, crab apple, cherry tree, and a dessert apple.

### Community involvement

The planting and aftercare can be carried out with Greening Swanage working group volunteers in conjunction with the Greengage project who are very keen to be involved with this garden. We are also working with the Operations Department who will continue with the mowing. Several of the residents close to the site have expressed their support for such a project and it is hoped that more people and groups will continue to be involved with the site's development.

## **Cost**

The costs involved in implementing this plan would mainly be with planting the 15 trees and the estimate is as below, it does not include seating, however we may be able to acquire some logs:

14 trees @ approx. £25 per tree = £350

1 walnut tree @ approx. £50-£65

Tree guards/ stakes and ties @ approx. £200

Plug plants can be grown on from seed at low cost by volunteers and the Greengage community garden.

Planting sundries – approx. £50

If signs are required to label trees, we would need to allow a budget of around £100-£200 to produce them.

The total budget for this is approximately £900.

We would hope to seek a grant or for the costs to be covered for the project by the Town Council and are also investigating another possible Dorset Council grant for this sort of pocket park project.

## **Timing**

It is proposed that much of this work is undertaken this winter, although it will be developed over a number of years.

## **Implications for Swanage Town Council**

The Council will be required to cut the grass on a regular basis. Additionally, the Town Council will retain responsibility for health and safety and the ultimate management of the site.

However, the day to day running of the site would be undertaken by Greening Swanage, which sits within the structure of Sustainable Swanage. Therefore, it is essential that a 'Memorandum of Understanding' is developed between the Town Council's Operations Team and Sustainable Swanage. This will set out the responsibilities and requirements of each organisation with regards the management of the site. It is proposed that this is developed before any groundwork is undertaken.

The Town Council should also consider whether it wishes to consult neighbours of the site prior to planting being undertaken.

## **Recommendation**

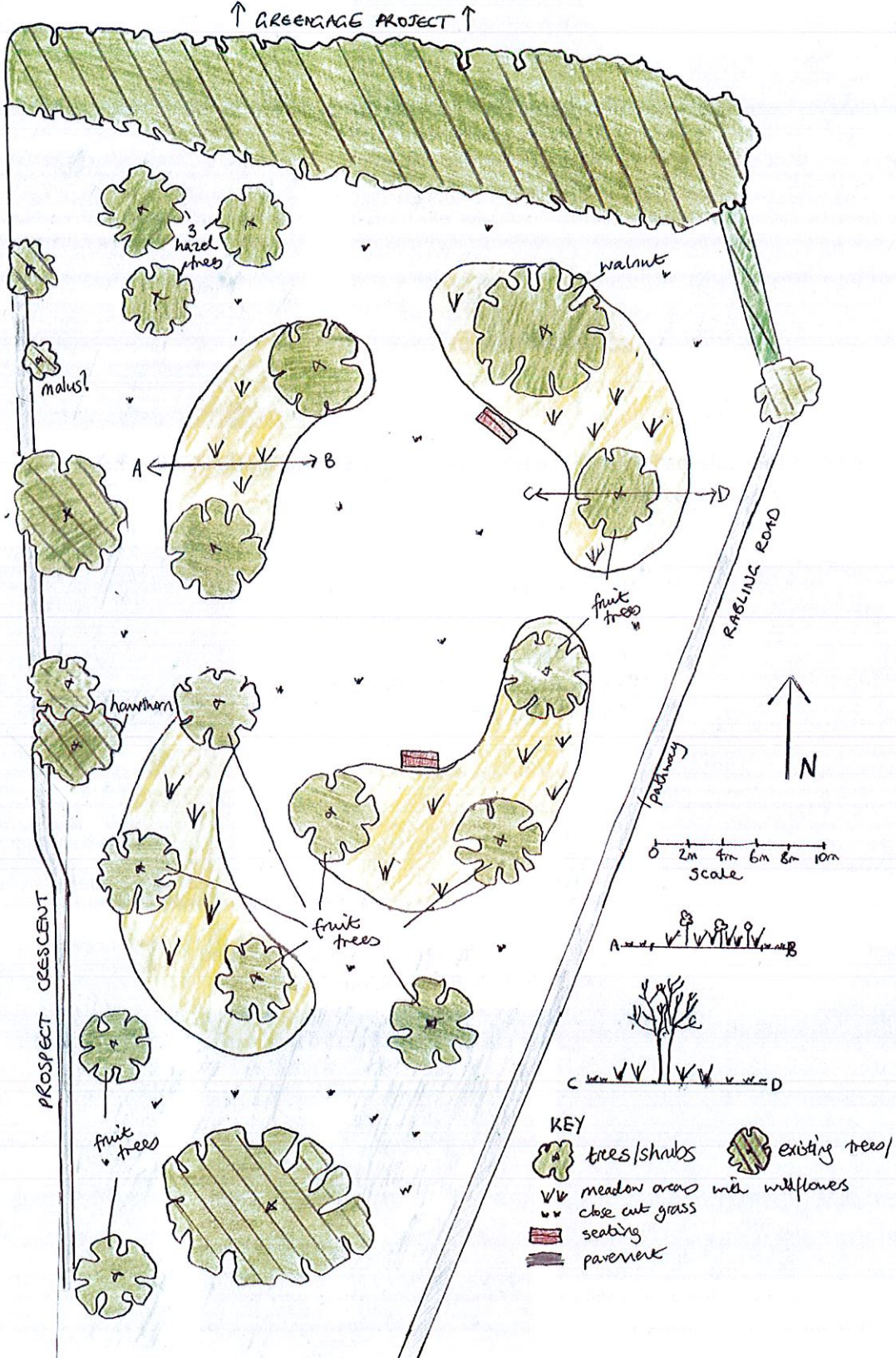
- 1) That the Rabbling Green Pocket Park concept and design is adopted by the Town Council
- 2) That a Memorandum of Understanding is produced by Sustainable Swanage and Swanage Town Council and approved at a future meeting of the Town Council
- 3) That the Town Council consider if they wish to allocate a grant of £900 towards the funding of this project.

Sarah Spurling  
Sustainable Swanage Officer

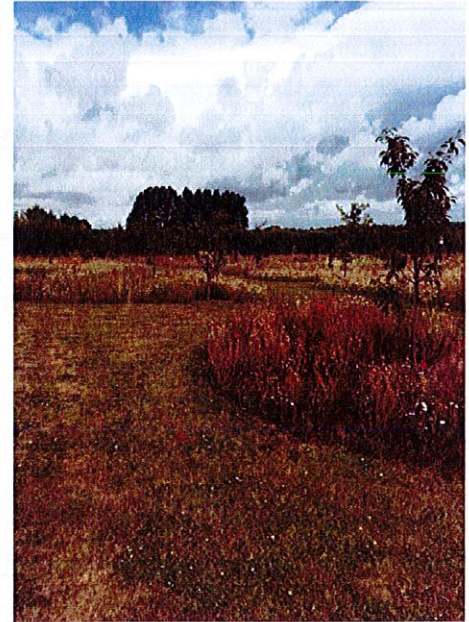
September 2020



# Rabling Road Green 'Pocket Park' Design Proposal



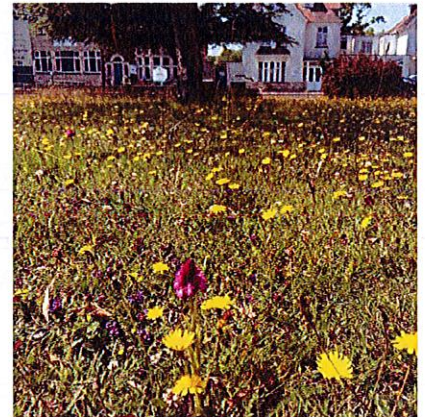
## Inspiration



The arboretum and annual meadow at Holme Nurseries has provided inspiration for the meadow shapes with tree planting within these areas.

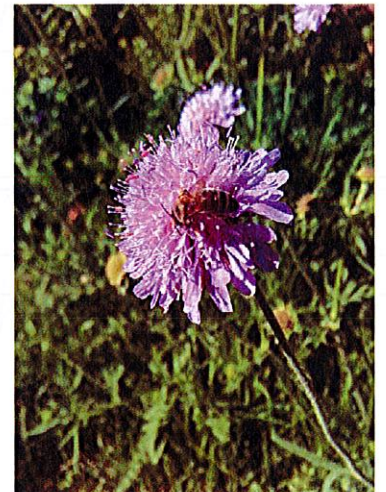
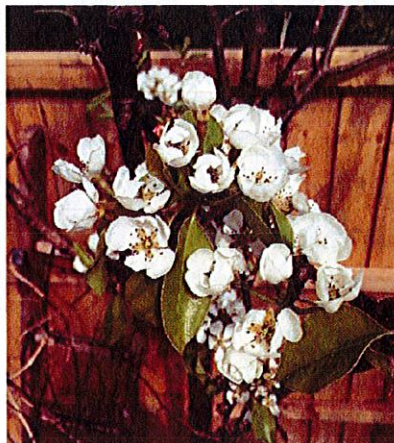


All Saints church have allowed some of their lawns to grow long with neat mown edges and have enjoyed colourful flowers, more insects and even 2 species of orchids this year.



knapweed (left), teasels, daisies and yellow rattle. Below, blossoms providing a welcome sight in spring.

Other flowers that could be planted include field scabious (right) and



### **Swanage Downs – Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Project Update**

During July and August we have begun the first stages of the process which are to complete a habitat map of the site and survey the species present. Firstly, we acquired existing species records on the site from Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC). The list they provided included 291 species of plants, insects, birds and mammals, many of which are Dorset Notable Species, some are rare and/or threatened species. Some are noted to be S41, of principal importance nationally. Some of the records, however, date back to year 2000 with no new records noted for the last 3 years. An up to date survey was required to obtain new data. July is quite late in the year to organise a comprehensive survey but we have made a good start and have plans to continue into next season and are recruiting specialist experts to help with the different species groups such as bees, orthoptera and birds.

Local plant expert David Leadbetter has covered the area extensively over the summer and has recorded 203 different plant species so far. We have completed a habitat compartment map with the grass area divided according to use of the site and with a view to assist the management plan and cutting regime of different areas.

We have also begun with the help of David and two other regular volunteers, to survey butterflies on the site, we have only been surveying for a short period in the season but have recorded a total of 15 species so far. Completing a butterfly survey walk is a great way to involve people in the monitoring of the site and is suitable for families too. I have contacted Butterfly Conservation and the Dorset Butterfly Records Officer about setting up a formal butterfly transect route across the site as part of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. They are keen to help with setting this up. We just need to get the route established and drawn up and recruit people who are keen to take part, we already have a list of interested people.

Bryan Edwards the county recorder from DERC is able to come and visit the site in spring and can help with recording difficult groups such as lichen and bees and advising on specific management.

### **Mowing**

I have worked closely with the Town Councils Operations team with regards plans around the mowing regime for this season which will occur in September. We have discussed how different sections would be managed slightly differently according to their location and use and the desired result from each section. A plan for this year has been agreed, this may be adapted for future years based on results next season. For example it is proposed that the top section (6a) would be kept short to allow for recreation and the grass at the end of this season cut and left. For other areas less trampled and richer in diversity of species, such as area 4 and 6b it is recommended to cut and collect grass in order to reduce the fertility of the site which leads to less vigorous grass growth and allows more wildflowers and other grasses to take hold. Some smaller selected areas will not be cut this year for diversity of habitat but may then be cut in other years. We have sought advice from the Durlston Rangers and colleagues in the Environment Advice Team and based the selection also on results from the flora survey this summer.

## **Next Steps - Management Plan**

The next step is to write up the results of the survey and the formal management plan. It is useful to look at the history of the site and how it has been used in the past to provide an understanding of the way it is today. One of our volunteers has been collating some information and pictures and we will ask members of the community to add their knowledge also. It is another good way to engage with people on the project and will be part of our consultation with the community on the LNR process.

## **Recommendation**

To note progress with the development of the LNR at the Swanage Downs.

Sarah Spurling  
Sustainable Swanage Officer

September 2020

## **Website Accessibility Regulations - Compliance Plan - To authorise budget for new website**

### **Background**

From 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 all local council websites will have to comply with the government's accessibility requirements and must achieve Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 level AA as part of meeting these requirements. At the least, councils should have a plan of action and an accessibility statement in place by this date.

WCAG 2.1 is based on 4 design principles:-

- Perceivable
- Operable
- Understandable
- Robust

Local councils therefore need to make reasonable adjustments to their websites to ensure that they are accessible to people with various disabilities. These include:-

- Impaired vision
- Motor difficulties
- Cognitive impairments or learning disabilities
- Deafness or impaired hearing

Members of the Town Council's Communications Strategy Working Party met via Zoom on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to discuss the Council's existing website and Compliance Plan in relation to WCAG 2.1.

### **Actions being undertaken and next steps**

Officers are currently undertaking a basic accessibility check of the website, following which the Council will need to publish its accessibility statement describing how the website is or is not compliant before the deadline of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. It must also detail how people can contact the Council to report accessibility problems, how to obtain alternatives to content that is not accessible to them, and provide information about work in progress towards greater compliance.

Issues that need to be addressed with the Council's website include the following:-

- Outdated PDF documents.
- The site is not user friendly on some mobiles/handheld devices.
- The beach hut booking system.

A copy of the Accessibility Statement for Dorchester Town Council is attached for information purposes.

Working party members felt that the Council's existing website was user friendly, and should continue to be used as a point of reference and provide information about Council services, regular news/updates and details of projects. However, it was felt that it was in need of some updating and refreshing.

Officers are in the process of firming up what is required and three quotes have been obtained, from the Council's existing website provider and two other companies, for the design and build of a new WCAG 2.1 compliant website. The maximum estimated cost has been advised as £11,000. This cost would include the provision of accessibility training for officers on how to design and input content correctly across the new website.

**Decisions required:**

- a) The Council is asked to authorise a budget of up to £11,000 for the design and build of a new WCAG 2.1 compliant Swanage Town Council website.
- b) To determine whether the Communications Strategy Working Party wish to play a role in assessing tenders and awarding the contract.

Niki Clark  
Administration & Communications Manager  
September 2020

**For further information please visit the links below:**

- **Swanage Town Council website**  
[www.swanage.gov.uk](http://www.swanage.gov.uk)
- **Accessibility statement for Dorchester Town Council**  
<https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/docs/corpgov/financial/Accessibility-statement-for-Dorchester-Town-Council.pdf>
- **GOV.UK Understanding WCAG 2.1**  
<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag>

# Accessibility statement for Dorchester Town Council.

This website is run by Dorchester Town Council. We want as many people as possible to be able to use this website. For example, that means you should be able to:

- zoom in up to 250% without the text spilling off the screen
- navigate most of the website using just a keyboard
- navigate most of the website using speech recognition software
- listen to most of the website using a screen reader (including the most recent versions of JAWS, NVDA and VoiceOver).

We've also made the website text as simple as possible to understand.

[AbilityNet](#) has advice on making your device easier to use if you have a disability. The BBC accessibility pages have advice on changing internet settings <http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility/>

We know some parts of this website aren't fully accessible:

- the text won't reflow in a single column when you change the size of the browser window
- Change colours, contrast levels and fonts
- you can't modify the line height or spacing of text
- most older PDF documents aren't fully accessible to screen reader software
- live video streams don't have captions, but we are working on this.
- some of our online forms are difficult to navigate using just a keyboard
- you can't skip to the main content when using a screen reader
- there's a limit to how far you can magnify the map on our 'contact us' page

What to do if you can't access parts of this website

If you need information on this website in a different format like accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille:

- email [admin@dorchester-tc.gov.uk](mailto:admin@dorchester-tc.gov.uk)
- call 01305 266861
- We'll consider your request and get back to you in seven days.

If you can't view the map on our 'contact us' page, call or email us [<https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/Top+Menu/Contact+Us>] for directions.

## Reporting accessibility problems with this website

We're always looking to improve the accessibility of this website. If you find any problems that aren't listed on this page or think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, contact: Nigel Hayes, Financial Controller, 01305 819033 or [nigelhayes@dorchester-tc.gov.uk](mailto:nigelhayes@dorchester-tc.gov.uk)

## Enforcement procedure

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the 'accessibility regulations'). If you're not happy with how we respond to your complaint, [contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#).

## Technical information about this website's accessibility

Dorchester Town Council is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

This website is partially compliant with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1](#) AA standard, due to the non-compliances listed below.





## **Content that's not within the scope of the accessibility regulations.**

### **PDFs and other documents**

Many of our older PDFs and Word documents don't meet accessibility standards - for example, they may not be structured so they're accessible to a screen reader. This doesn't meet WCAG 2.1 success criterion 4.1.2. The accessibility regulations [don't require us to fix PDFs or other documents published before 23 September 2019](#) if they're not essential to providing our services. For example, we don't plan to fix earlier agendas from meetings. Any new PDFs or Word documents we publish will meet accessibility standards and versions will be available

### **Live video**

Live video streams don't have captions. This doesn't meet WCAG 2.1 success criterion 1.2.4 (captions - live). We don't plan to add captions to live video streams because live video is [exempt from meeting the accessibility regulations](#). This will be reviewed prior to September 2020.

## **How we tested this website**

This website was last tested on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019. The test was carried out by Nigel Hayes.

This statement was prepared on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019. It was last updated on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

