

A vision for West Dorset Community Plan 2010 - 2026



www.dorsetforyou.com/communityplan/west

Cover photos: (main) Maiden Castle, Dorchester, (left - right) Dorchester Festival 2007 (Alastair Nisbet), West Bay, Puddletown Parish Plan event, Basket making in Powerstock (Ian Dalglish/Natural England/AONB), Walking in West Dorset (Mark Simons/DCC), Dorchester.

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Mark Simons/DCC

The results of the 2008 Place Survey show that the people of West Dorset are happier, in nearly every respect, with the place where they live than most people throughout the country or even in the rest of Dorset. But there is clearly no room for complacency.

The Place Survey did not consult young people, and a number of other local issues are not really highlighted by this research. The lack of affordable housing, transport and access to all sorts of services is increasing the drift of young people and families away from this area. To live in this beautiful part of the country is sometimes not enough without quality, well paid jobs, housing and many services and facilities that should be available in the 21st century. However at the same time we have to protect West Dorset's unique heritage which makes it such a special place to live.

This new plan, which has its roots in the community through extensive research and consultation, will provide a framework for much more than the next decade as it reflects the views of a wide variety people and organisations.

Its recommendations, coupled with regularly updated action plans are intended to shape our community well into the next decade. Although it will need updating from time to time, we want to take the long term view to make sure that real change and improvements do happen.

David Webb

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Webb'.

Chairman – West Dorset Partnership



Introduction: Why produce a community plan?

Background

Community planning is about working together to improve people's quality of life. It was developed from the Local Government Act 2000 which placed a duty on councils (county and districts) to produce a sustainable community plan or strategy. The aim is to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of an area. Community plans involve and reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities and organisations living and working in the area to support vibrant and sustainable communities.

The first community plan for West Dorset was published in 2004 and was revised in 2006.

This new community plan sets out a vision shared by the members of the West Dorset Partnership and will run to 2026. It covers the issues that research has shown really matter to local people including housing, transport and roads, the environment, health, safety, the economy, culture and leisure and community facilities.

In developing this community plan the West Dorset Partnership looked at published parish plans, action plans from the local area partnerships (LAPs), sifted through issues from local forums, the results of recent consultations about services, and held discussions throughout West Dorset with individuals, local groups and partner organisations.

A draft version of the plan went out for public consultation between January and April 2010 and this final version of the plan was adopted by the West Dorset Partnership in July 2010.

Who is involved in the West Dorset Partnership?

The partnership board is made up of public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations including:

- Age UK Dorchester
- Beaminster and Village Local Area Partnership
- Bridport Local Area Partnership
- Business Link Wessex
- Churches Together Dorset
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Dorchester Area Community Partnership
- Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils
- Dorset Community Action
- Dorset County Council
- Dorset Fire and Rescue
- Dorset Police
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Lyme Forward – Lyme Regis Local Area Partnership
- Magna Housing Association
- NHS Dorset
- Sherborne Area Partnership
- South West Dorset Multicultural Network
- Third Sector Sustainability Network
- West Dorset District Council

A wider partnership network has been developed and any organisations working within the district can join.

For details, contact: westdorsetpartnership@westdorset-dc.gov.uk or via www.dorsetforyou.com/communityplan/west.

Community Planning in West Dorset

In West Dorset there are four levels of community planning. By working with these groups and partnerships, local people, organisations and businesses can make a real difference to their area.

Parish Plans

Parish Plans are developed with the local community at the grassroots. Local people, often working with the parish council, ask local residents what they value about their community and what improvements they would like made. Some actions can be completed at a community level, such as putting up a new notice board. Other, larger actions may need to be taken on by relevant service providers, such as the county council improving road surfaces. These issues are usually fed into the Local Area Partnerships and on to the West Dorset Partnership.

Local Area Partnerships (LAPs)

Local area partnerships are based around five of West Dorset's market towns and the surrounding villages:

- Beaminster and Villages Local Area Partnership
- Bridport Local Area Partnership
- Dorchester Area Community Partnership
- LymeForward – Lyme Regis Local Area Partnership
- Sherborne Area Partnership

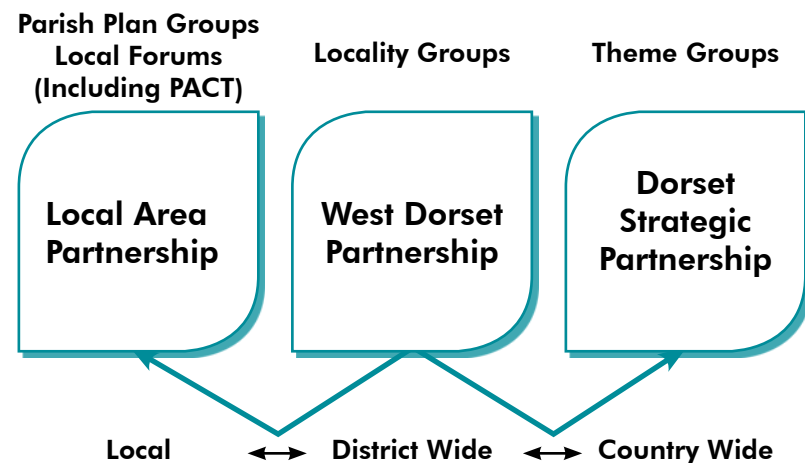
They bring together local groups and forums and produce an action plan for the area. Actions are delivered in the community where possible, but where input is needed from other organisations the partnerships will work with these agencies to try to improve services and the way they are delivered locally. Relevant actions are fed through to the West Dorset Partnership.

West Dorset Partnership

Formed in 2003, the West Dorset Partnership is responsible for producing and implementing the West Dorset community plan and regular action plans. The partnership members formally respond indicating how they can help deliver actions. If actions cannot be supported, member organisations need to give reasons, such as the action is against national or local policy. The West Dorset Partnership monitors the responses to local action plans and where there are common actions, it can lobby for changes within partner organisations or nationally, for example for changes in spending priorities. Where issues and actions are strategic and need to be achieved across the county these are passed on to the Dorset Strategic Partnership.

Dorset Strategic Partnership

The Dorset Strategic Partnership is the voice of the county, excluding Bournemouth and Poole. It feeds issues to regional and national bodies and draws together the needs of communities particularly where these are common across Dorset. Issues from West Dorset feed into the Dorset sustainable community strategy 2010-2020.



A community profile of West Dorset

West Dorset is generally a very rural area covering 418 square miles. 71 per cent of the district is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the 26 miles of coastline is designated a World Heritage Site. There are also many historic buildings and conservation areas. As we address community needs like housing, business and industry, we must also make sure we protect and enhance this valuable landscape.

The district has a population of approximately 97,200¹. There are roughly as many men as there are women (about 48 per cent men and 52 per cent woman²). West Dorset's population is likely to increase by 15 per cent to 111,800 in 2026³. In 2008 approximately a third⁴ of the population was over the age of 60. It is expected that 67 per cent of the population increase will be people over 60 as people live longer and more retire to the area. Whilst this increase may bring an increased number of potential volunteers, the district will also need far more services to support older people including increased facilities for those working in these supporting services.

In 2008, about 26 per cent of the population was under the age of 25. By 2026, following the current trend, this age group is likely to reduce to 22 per cent, as young people move out of the area because of limited opportunities – for example they cannot afford to live in the area or get relevant employment. There is, therefore, a need to encourage young people to stay, and attract more into West Dorset, through the provision of services (education, training and employment and leisure as well as services to support young families such as extended childcare).

Estimated figures⁵, for mid 2007, show that approximately seven per cent of the population - 6,500 residents - are from black and minority ethnic groups. Whilst the

percentage of the population is relatively low there are incidents of hate crime such as racial abuse which need to be addressed to ensure we increase community cohesion – this also needs to be addressed in terms of homophobic abuse.

Disability statistics for the district are not specifically recorded however the 2001 census showed that 19 per cent of residents had a limiting long-term illness. This is likely to increase with the ageing population. There is a need to ensure that services meet the needs of all groups in the community, for example in terms of physical and intellectual access (such as services to support those with learning disabilities).

Half of the residents live in the six towns, with the remainder in the 132 rural parishes. Low wage levels in the area and high house prices (as well as private rental costs) result in many young people either moving out of the area or living outside the district and commuting to work.

In the 2008 Place Survey⁶ a large sample of local residents were asked if they were satisfied with their local area (within a 20 minutes walk). 91 per cent of residents in West Dorset are either very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. This figure has improved by two per cent since 2006 and compares with the 84 per cent across Dorset. Although this figure is high, there is still much work to be done to improve services and the quality of life for residents in West Dorset, particularly with regard to issues involving rurality, housing and access to services.

Residents were also asked to prioritise the aspects of life that makes somewhere a good place to live and identify which of these are most in need of improvement in West Dorset. The resulting priorities are listed below:

Local priorities important in making somewhere a good place to live (in order of importance)	Local priorities most in need of improvement in local area (in order of need)
1. The level of crime	1. Affordable, decent housing
2. Health services	2. Activities for teenagers
3. Affordable, decent housing	3. Road and pavement repairs
4. Access to nature	4. Public transport
5. Public transport	5. The level of traffic congestion
6. Clean streets	6. Job prospects
7. Education provision	7. Wage levels and local cost of living
8. Shopping facilities	8. Clean streets
9. Job prospects	9. Facilities for young children
10. The level of traffic congestion	10. Shopping facilities
11. Wage levels and local cost of living	11. The level of crime
12. Parks and open spaces	12. Sports and leisure facilities
13. Activities for teenagers	13. Community activities
14. Community activities	14. Cultural facilities (for example libraries, museums)
15. Road and pavement repairs	15. Health services
16. Cultural facilities (for example libraries, museums)	16. Parks and open spaces
17. The level of pollution	17. The level of pollution
18. Facilities for young children	18. Education provision
19. Sports and leisure facilities	19. Access to nature
20. Other	20. Race relations
21. Race relations	21. Other

A vision for the future

This community plan looks forward to how the district might change by 2026. It will guide future planning policies that will deliver the community plan in terms of land based planning.

By 2026 West Dorset will be a district where:

- The beauty, geodiversity⁷ and biodiversity of coast, countryside and historic settlements remain, including maintenance, conservation and enhancement of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and coastal World Heritage Site and the quality of the built environment is maintained and enhanced
- People understand the causes and effects of climate change and measures have been taken to reduced our impact and adapt to changes. This includes avoiding flood risk and incorporating sustainable construction methods, energy efficiency and renewable energy in development
- There is a variety of housing to meet a range of incomes, including enough affordable housing for those in need
- People live, work and learn in more balanced communities with less need to travel; thriving market towns support the surrounding rural areas, and quality local facilities are available in villages. There is a good IT and communications and other services and facilities are accessible by a range of transport modes, including improved and more flexible public transport
- Conditions have been established for economic growth including higher-value employment sectors, a greater choice of higher paid employment and local opportunities for training for all ages and abilities. Tourism provides local employment and a high quality visitor experience, benefiting from and respecting the quality of the environment
- The community is safe, healthy, active, engaged and involved, with a diversity of cultural and leisure activities

Local visions for key settlements have also been developed to go alongside the district-wide vision, highlighting specific issues relating to those areas. These are shown in the following sections linked to the relevant local area partnership. It should be noted that whilst the local area partnership areas cover the market towns and their hinterlands the visions are specific to the market towns. The local area partnerships develop their own, often, shorter term actions plans. The priorities

noted under the local area partnership sections are the immediate issues they are focusing on rather than longer term aims

A general vision for the rural hinterlands of these areas has been developed:

The rural hinterlands and rural area:

- There will be improved ways of delivering and accessing services in rural communities, including a number of sustainable rural settlements that offer a range of facilities to serve their local area. Development will be small-scale and will concentrate on meeting local needs, particularly addressing the needs for affordable housing, focused on the more sustainable settlements

The countryside will:

- Continue to be a working, living landscape, with an active farming sector using environmentally friendly land management initiatives and supported by farm diversification. The quality of the countryside will be protected for its own value and in recognition of its range of environmental designations, while taking account of the wider community's needs. Areas of international and national importance, such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and World Heritage Site, will be protected from harmful development and the tranquillity of the countryside will be preserved



Ian Dalgeish/Natural England/
Dorset AONB



Ian Dalgeish/Natural England/
Dorset AONB

Beaminster and Villages Local Area Partnership

Beaminster and Villages Local Area Partnership (BAVLAP) was formed in 2007.

The area has a population of about 9,000, including around 3,000 living in Beaminster and 5,600 within the rural parishes. The partnership area is almost completely within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (excludes a small area of Oathill, Greenham and Horn Ash).

The partnership has immediate priorities including:

- Encourage the development of theme based forums in the BAVLAP area
- Partnership working to promote and strengthen the local economy, in particular support for small and medium sized enterprises
- Raise awareness and campaign on the need for more facilities and positive activities for young people
- Encourage intergenerational projects to aid community cohesion
- Ensure that the local community has access to information about services that are available to support them in local area

The vision for **Beaminster** is to:

- Meet the local needs housing, employment and community facilities on a small scale while retaining its attractive historic character and the beauty of the surrounding countryside
- Improve accessibility to facilities and develop its role as a local service centre to surrounding villages



Bridport Local Area Partnership

Bridport Local Area Partnership was formed in 2004.

The area has a population of about 20,000, including around 8,000 living in Bridport and 12,000 within the rural parishes. The partnership area is completely within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The partnership has immediate priorities including:

- To explore mechanisms to improve the delivery of affordable housing in the Bridport area
- Secure improved delivery of services locally through parish clustering
- Actively investigate opportunities for greater involvement of young people in community planning
- Support initiatives to improve the provision and promotion of public and community transport
- Support the work of Bridport Local Area Skills Training (BLAST) to develop improved local delivery of skills training

The vision for **Bridport** is to:

- Continue as a working town with a good balance between housing and jobs and a vibrant town centre providing shopping, cultural and other facilities to the rural hinterland
- Protect the built heritage of the town, the surrounding nationally-designated landscape and the floodplain, along with the countryside views and green spaces that contribute significantly to the town's character
- Prioritise the use of previously-developed land for development, including the regeneration of the town's southwest quadrant
- Focus development on meeting local needs for jobs and housing, providing opportunities for young people to stay in the area and exploring innovative and sustainable ways of meeting these needs
- Aim to become a low impact sustainable town, building on its reputation for local food and produce, developing sustainable tourism, and encouraging alternatives to the private car



Chickerell has a population of about 5,400 and residents access many services from Weymouth because of its close proximity. Chickerell is outside the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Chickerell does not have a local area partnership but a parish plan has been developed for the area.

- The parish plan includes the following aims:
- More activities for younger residents
- Reduce speeding traffic and make roads safer
- Improve recycling facilities
- Maintain the local environment
- Support community activities

The vision for **Chickerell** is to:

- Maintain and enhance wildlife and nature conservation interests such as the Fleet and Radipole. Continue to look principally to Weymouth for its higher order⁸ needs
- Continue to provide development that serves its own needs as well as the needs of the Weymouth and South Dorset area
- Increase the range of local facilities



Dorchester Area Community Partnership was formed in 2001, as a pilot partnership.

The area has a population of about 41,000, including around 18,000 living in Dorchester and 23,000 within the rural parishes. The western, northern and southern parishes in the partnership area are within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The partnership has immediate priorities for the area including:

- Improve regular bus services between the rural villages and Dorchester
- Promote the area as a good example of sustainable living
- Maintain local post offices, shops, libraries, pubs and other local facilities in the area
- Raise awareness and campaign on the need for more facilities and positive activities for young people
- Improve road safety on rural roads
- Improve facilities within the areas so they are accessible to all regardless of age or ability

The vision for **Dorchester** is to:

- Enhance its role as county town and a quality sub-regional centre with good quality public transport links to the surrounding towns and rural areas
- Achieve a balance between housing and jobs by further housing development to provide choice for people to live and work locally and help reduce commuting
- Develop the offer of retail, health, cultural, leisure and community facilities, including significant redevelopment in the town centre, and environmental and traffic management improvements in the town
- Encourage development that is to a high standard of design that promotes the character and heritage that is special to Dorchester



LymeForward – Lyme Regis local area partnership was formed in 2004.

The area has a population of about 5,000, including around 3,600 living in Lyme Regis and 1,300 within the rural parishes. The area lies on the border with Devon so there are cross border issues that need to be addressed across a number of local authorities as well as other agencies within the two counties. The partnership area is almost completely within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Uplyme area within East Devon is not included).

The partnership has immediate priorities including:

- Increase the range and quantity of housing available for those born or employed locally
- Support existing businesses and cultural attractions, and enhance a year-round economy, for example by establishing a Jurassic Coast Field Studies Centre
- Complete shelters regeneration project, support partners in achieving stabilisation of East Cliff
- Reduce traffic congestion and pedestrian danger points, and improve both quantity and connectivity of local public transport provision
- Provide children and young people with a dedicated youth centre, a skatepark and increase provision for youth activities

The vision for **Lyme Regis** is to:

- Preserve its unique character, including its dramatic coastal setting, historic buildings and visual charm
- At the same time, provide opportunities to meet local needs for housing, employment and leisure facilities, helping to achieve and retain the mix of ages and skills required for a viable community
- Manage the impacts of development, for example on traffic, house prices and the environment, including adapting to and mitigating against the impact of climate change, and respecting the vulnerable geology
- Develop its role as a visitor and educational centre on the World Heritage Coast, with a strong identity based on its geological and cultural heritage



Sherborne Area Partnership was formed in 2004.

The area has a population of about 19,000, including around 9,590 living in Sherborne and 9,410 within the rural parishes. The area lies on the border with Somerset so there are cross border issues that need to be addressed across a number of local authorities as well as other agencies within the two counties. Parts of the southern most parishes (Stockwood, Melbury Bubb, Batcombe and Hillfield) are within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The partnership has immediate priorities including:

- More affordable housing for local people
- Better services for older teenagers and young adults
- More sustainable, year-round tourism
- Easier access to services and facilities for people with disabilities
- More exemplar projects that combat climate change and/or promote recycling

The vision for **Sherborne** is to:

- Conserve and enhance the outstanding historic and cultural character and landscape setting
- Develop to meet increased need for housing and jobs, and improve the balance between them
- Continue to promote it as an inland visitor destination
- Improve the accessibility to public transport and reduce the impact of traffic on the town
- Reduce the social inequalities of the town and ensure that residents of all ages have access to a wide range of community facilities



The Community Plan

The role of the community plan is to improve the quality of life for residents and workers in the district. To achieve this there are three themes which underpin the community plan: **sustainability, equality and diversity and climate change and peak oil**⁹. Although these could have their own themed section, they cut across all the themes within the community plan so are incorporated throughout the plan.

Sustainability: We need to ensure that any actions delivered as part of the community plan support sustainable communities (socially, economically and environmentally).

Equality and diversity: As well as recognising and promoting the diversity across the district we need to ensure there is equality of access to services and prioritise actions which reduce inequalities. The main ethos of the plan is that there is mutual respect and understanding which recognises that some groups have specific needs, for example because of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief or sexual orientation, as well as economic disadvantage and rural isolation.

Climate change and peak oil: One of the biggest threats to us is that of climate change which has major economic, social and health consequences. It is anticipated that in the future as oil reserves dwindle and new sources of oil become expensive to extract, fuel prices will rise and we will need to find alternatives to relying on fossil fuels. To tackle climate change and peak oil we need to become more resilient within local communities where possible, and rethink the way we live and work.

This community plan is set out under eight themes:

- Decent, affordable and sustainable housing
- Improved transport and access to services
- Economic wellbeing
- Safer communities
- Health and wellbeing
- Culture and leisure
- Supporting our local communities
- Protecting and enhancing our environment

The themes and aims in the plan have come out of the key issues which are of concern to local people and have been highlighted through recent consultations including the 2008 Place Survey¹⁰, parish and local area partnership plans, and public consultation on the draft plan.

Many of the themes and aims interlink with each other, for example housing issues can impact on health; good transport links support people accessing jobs and training; the quality of the environment impacts on the economy through tourism and also links to both health and wellbeing and culture and leisure through walking and cycling opportunities. The aims are not listed in priority order but are numbered for easy reference.

Delivering the community plan

The community plan sets out the issues facing the district and how we aim to achieve the vision by working together. The plan will be delivered by:

- Influencing individual partner organisations' own delivery plans and strategies
- A biennial **action plan** developed by the West Dorset Partnership to address aims as a partnership

This document is intended to be aspirational but public funding may not always be available or may become increasingly stretched to provide more services for a larger population. New ways of working will need to be developed to sustain local communities and this plan aims to support this process.

Although the community plan runs to 2026 it will be monitored annually and reviewed every four years.



Decent, affordable and sustainable housing

Affordable housing¹¹ is fundamental in making somewhere a good place to live (featuring third in importance in the Place Survey)¹² and is highlighted in West Dorset as the top priority for improvement.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A** **There is not enough affordable housing available**, including in the rural areas. House prices are out of balance with local wages – in 2008 house prices were 23 per cent¹³ above the national average, and outstripped average wages by a ratio of almost 14 to 1, compared with 10 to 1 in England. For those in low paid employment such as care workers it is particularly difficult to afford a house. People can't afford decent homes, and either live in poverty, or move out of the area. There is also a need to ensure we meet the specific needs of different groups who may have particular accommodation requirements
- B** **About 1 in every 20 homes are second homes**, with this proportion being much higher along the coast. In some places this can make it even harder to maintain local services year-round
- C** **Running costs are increasing due to rising fuel prices**, and are likely to rise further if homes are not built with or do not have improved energy efficiency and water conservation. It is estimated that almost eight per cent¹⁴ of West Dorset's population live in fuel poverty (when more than 10 per cent of someone's income is spent on fuel to maintain adequate heating and hot water). 5,690 homes (12 per cent) in the district have a poor energy performance rating which can pose a high risk to people suffering ill health due to excess cold. This is above the national level of 10 per cent. Only 66 per cent¹⁵ of our dwellings currently meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard¹⁶. The age of the housing stock and the nature of its construction make it difficult to achieve modern standards. Cold, damp housing leads to increased asthma, heart disease and stress, adding to health care pressures (see also health and wellbeing)
- D** **The population is becoming increasingly elderly**¹⁷, with more people needing specially-adapted properties, and supported, sheltered or extra care housing¹⁸ as well as a greater need for support services including affordable homes for care staff to support people to live independently
- E** **There is a need for a range of housing to reflect the different needs of employers and employees.** In 2001, 13,700 people commuted to work in

the district. More than half came from Weymouth and Portland and 20 per cent from Somerset

- F** **Because nearly three quarters of the district is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** and many communities are designated as conservation areas, housing and other new developments need to reflect and enhance the local character

Key aims

- 1 Increase the amount of affordable housing across a range of tenures (including social, rented, shared ownership), especially to support and encourage young people to live in the area
- 2 Ensure accommodation meets the requirement of everyone including those with specific needs, for example those who are homeless, Gypsies and Travellers, and people with learning or physical disabilities or mental health issues
- 3 Make sure the infrastructure needs and facilities from new housing are met through development, for example public transport, green spaces and IT, so that communities are sustainable
- 4 Help homes to become more environmentally sustainable – including improving energy efficiency and water conservation and using sustainable construction methods
- 5 Promote the building of new homes and adaption of existing houses to the lifetime homes standards and to meet the decent homes standard
- 6 Provide enough supported, sheltered or extra care housing for local people. Provide support for older people and help them understand the options that are available
- 7 Direct new housing provision – affordable and market – to meet local need or where it can help provide a better balance of homes and jobs for all ages; and maximise the use of the existing housing stock
- 8 Ensure new housing maintains and enhances the local character and respects the high quality environment



Improved transport and access to services

In a rural area like West Dorset access to services and facilities is an important issue. Some residents are disadvantaged from accessing services and facilities and those that are able to, have to travel further, which inevitably increases carbon emissions in the district.

Census 2001 figures showed that 83 per cent¹⁹ of households in the district owned a car or van which was 10 per cent higher than the national average.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A Jobs and community facilities are not always close to where people live.** This may be made worse by the threatened closure of many rural facilities such as post offices, shops and garages. People who do not have access to a car due to cost, age or other reasons, are becoming increasingly isolated as they cannot access training centres, health care services and other facilities and opportunities. Halstock, Frome Valley, and Cam Vale are in the top one per cent of areas that are most inaccessible to services²⁰
- B Providing alternative transport to the private car is difficult in many rural areas** – there is often only an infrequent bus service or none at all, and only a few settlements have rail access. However because car ownership levels are relatively high and people do not necessarily travel at the same time, providing regular bus services in rural areas can be expensive to run. Alternative solutions need to be found to reduce isolation and carbon emissions where possible
- C Some parts of the district are now experiencing high levels of transport-related pollution and traffic congestion** (which is often made worse by tourist traffic) – not only is this bad for the environment, but it is also bad for people's health and the economy. However, providing alternative transport to the car is difficult in many rural areas, we need to recognise that travel by car is likely to continue, but seek to find other ways of accessing services
- D The rural or community nature of the roads is unsuitable for carrying increasing volumes of traffic (and increasing vehicle sizes).** This issue, and driver error, means we have higher than average road casualty rates, higher road maintenance costs and safety concerns for pedestrian and cyclists (see also safer communities)
- E Parish plans highlight poor road and pavements surfaces in the district** – this can result in reduced safety on the roads and pavements, particularly for walkers and cyclists. The rural nature of the district means that these roads are

key access routes for communities and need to be well maintained although it is recognised that resources are limited and have to be spread across Dorset

Key aims

- 1 Reduce the need to travel by providing jobs and services close to homes or to places which are accessible by other means of transport to the car. Look at innovative ways of working (for example using new technologies, developing joint deliveries and creating village hubs) to halt the decline in rural services and facilities
- 2 Encourage people to change the way they travel to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and reduce congestion – such as car sharing, walking, cycling, electric car charging points and providing park and ride facilities to good bus routes and around towns
- 3 Improve safety for walking, cycling and horse riding, in particular where there are not reasonably convenient and safe routes off road. Where possible make walking and cycling a priority on rural roads
- 4 Improve flexible, sufficiently frequent and affordable (such as concessionary) travel for young people and integrated alternatives to the private car for people of all ages and abilities – including community transport, public transport (road and rail). Bus and train services should also consistently cater for cyclists, pushchairs / buggies and wheelchairs
- 5 Support improved rail services through the district, for example a more frequent service between Dorchester and Bristol
- 6 Reduce the number of casualties caused by excessive traffic speeds on rural roads (see safer communities)
- 7 Promote greater respect between users of roads and pavements – such as not blocking drop kerbs or pavements
- 8 Maintain the character of the rural road and pavement network and ensure these are maintained while reflecting the area's special qualities
- 9 Improve freight control to take the heaviest traffic off the roads least suited to it





Mark Simons/DCC

Although West Dorset is perceived as a relatively affluent area, there are pockets of deprivation, especially in parts of Bridport and Dorchester – West Dorset ranks 235 out of 354 on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation²¹. This is not helped by the rural nature of the area.

Almost half of the workforce is in firms employing 50 people or more, however most firms are small.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A** Although West Dorset has a higher than average business survival rate²², it is difficult for many new business to get established or expand, especially in an economic downturn. Land costs can be expensive, and projected profit margins and productivity levels are often low. Current employment sites may not meet the needs of the market. This also has a knock-on effect on wages and job opportunities
- B** Wage levels are lower than average – average weekly pay in West Dorset is about £462²³ compared with £480 in England and Wales
- C** The pressures of delivering services like shops, post offices, garages and pubs has forced some to close reducing local employment opportunities and the withdrawal of services supporting other businesses. There are many small rural businesses that need supporting locally (see also supporting local communities)
- D** There is a shortage of labour with relevant skills or training. This is likely to increase, as a large proportion of existing skilled trades people are due to retire, and many young people continue to move away from the area as they cannot afford to live here or there are not the right opportunities for them. The loss of Dorset's industrial base has resulted in people commuting long distances, but poor transport makes access to jobs and training even more difficult (see also transport)
- E** The public services (including local authorities, health and schools etc) are the largest employers in the district (36 per cent of the total employment). Whilst public sector jobs are generally secure, increased pressures on public funding may result in difficulties
- F** Agriculture and fishing only account for 2.9 per cent of the total employment, but together with related rural business can play a major role in maintaining the quality of our countryside (see also our environment)

- G** **The area still has comparatively poor communications links** with low broadband speeds and patchy mobile phone coverage. This means that businesses are at a disadvantage nationally and the area is often regarded as a rural backwater. The district needs to improve its ability to attract businesses. The Olympics offer an opportunity for a long term legacy of improved broadband coverage
- H** **The tourism sector is important to the economy**, largely supported by the high quality environment. Distribution, hotels and restaurants are the second highest at 25 per cent, but many of the jobs are part-time, low paid and seasonal. The World Heritage Site and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide opportunities for developing a more year-round sustainable tourism offer (see also environment)
- I** **Although many businesses would like to be more environmentally friendly**, the high initial cost of some green technologies and practices can make this more difficult for small businesses, or where buildings are leased. The district is in a good position to support low carbon economies, for example local food production (see also environment)
- J** **Extended childcare services are needed to support families to access work and training (as well services such as health and leisure)**. Childcare services are usually run on a small scale basis which can make them difficult to be sustainable in the long term

Key aims

- 1** Support new and existing local businesses including social enterprises and local services, such as pubs, shops and schools, to act as centres/hubs for the community
- 2** Support a broad range of business types though by retaining and developing business parks and industrial estates, mixed use development and other opportunities for employment
- 3** Improve the skills base with better local training/retraining opportunities to meet local needs, including further and higher education, and vulnerable groups such as NEETs²⁴
- 4** Support people who are financially excluded, for example with access to banking facilities, rural banking services, supporting credit unions, financial education and access to information, advice and guidance

- 5** Work with providers to ensure there is high-speed broadband and mobile phone (including mobile internet) coverage across the district without compromising the area's special quality
- 6** Encourage year round employment opportunities
- 7** Benefit from the wider economic opportunities from Dorset's hosting of the sailing events as part of the Olympics in 2012
- 8** Support and protect tourism infrastructure and opportunities, including gaining benefit from the World Heritage Site and AONB designation while ensuring that the special qualities aren't harmed
- 9** Support businesses to become more environmentally sustainable (such as waste minimisation and energy efficiency) and support 'green' businesses (including providers of sustainable technology, renewable energy, eco-building, using local resources, for example water power)
- 10** Support agricultural and rural businesses developing, producing or using local products and encourage communities to support local business, for example farmers markets
- 11** Support initiatives to provide extended childcare services to allow parents to access work and training as well as health and leisure services





Reducing crime is very important in people's priorities for making somewhere a good place to live. However because crime rates in West Dorset, and Dorset as a whole, are low compared with other parts of England and Wales it has a lower scoring in the local priority for improvement.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A** **Fear of crime, although reducing, is often out of proportion with the actual crime levels** which may be exacerbated by the often limited visible police presence particularly in rural communities but is improving with the Police Community Support Officers for example working on Partners and Communities Together initiative (PACT)
- B** **There are a number of vulnerable people in the district who may be at risk of abuse, victims of other crimes or safety issues such as fire risk.** Close working relationships across agencies offers opportunities for sharing information to support people at risk
- C** **Anti social behaviour from all ages, who cause harassment, alarm and/or distress is an issue in the district.** This can include threatening behaviour and anti-social driving such as wheel spinning in a car park
- D** **Criminal damage is a factor in local crime figures,** and burglary (including rural non dwelling burglary) and vehicle crime are often seasonal
- E** **Violent crime, including domestic violence, remains a concern but it is reducing,** through a targeted multi-agency approach
- F** **The misuse of alcohol and drugs** (including underage drinking) people can be a cause of violent crime and this also leads to health problems (see also health and wellbeing)
- G** **Incidents of discrimination and harassment (hate crime) are often unreported.** Although this is not a big problem in the district, for those involved it has a significant impact and may relate to race, religion, disability or sexuality. In the district 83 per cent²⁵ of residents agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together (compared with Dorset at 77 per cent and 79 per cent across all districts nationally)
- H** **Whilst fatalities from fire are not high in the district, there is a need to reduce serious fire injuries,** protecting people and their homes. The majority of accidental dwelling fires in the district occur as a result of cooking, therefore such fires need to be targeted

- I** Although deliberate fires are not a huge problem in the area, there are a number of these fires in refuse and recycle bins which potentially redirects resources from other areas. When scrap metal prices are low there is often an increase in deliberate vehicle fires
- J** Rates of road deaths and injuries in West Dorset are higher than the England average²⁶, with 83 people injured or losing their lives on the road each year (see also transport section).
- K** There are a number of people at risk of offending but agencies can work with offenders and potential offenders through interventions and prevention
- L** The terrorist incidents in Exeter and Bristol highlight the need for all communities in the south-west to be aware of the potential for violent extremism and terrorist acts to happen anywhere at any time. Dorset in particular could be a target due to the 2012 Olympics

Key aims

- 1** Reduce the fear of crime for example by continuing the visible police presence, including the use of the Police Community Support Officers
- 2** Increase data sharing between organisations to support vulnerable and / or at risk people
- 3** Promote crime prevention schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and support the prevention of reoffending and the victims of crime, for example by developing community justice panels and restorative justice panels
- 4** Support organisations to tackle domestic violence, and alcohol and drug related crimes
- 5** Support initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour and bullying
- 6** Consider a strategic approach to providing CCTV across the district
- 7** Reduce discrimination of minority groups, by supporting for example, the reporting of hate crime, activities to promote mutual respect and English language lesson schemes
- 8** Reduce preventable accidents, incidents and injuries, including serious fire related injuries in the home and workplace by helping people to be more safety conscious, such as home safety checks including checking smoke alarms, educating on security measures and preventing falls
- 9** Support to reduce the number of deliberate fires

- 10** Reduce deaths and serious injuries in road traffic collisions in the district and help reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured
- 11** Implement the 'Prevent' strategy to raise awareness of violent extremism and violent acts by highlighting the risks and seek to enhance links with local vulnerable communities



Health and wellbeing

Residents are largely happy with the health services provided, although they are very important (featuring second) in making an area a good place to live.

Life expectancy in West Dorset is high with males at 79.9 and woman at 83.9²⁸. This compares with 77.5 for males and 81.7 for females nationally. For 2006-08 the district has a relatively low conception rate for 15-17 year olds at a rate of 21.1 per 1,000, compared with 40.9 for England, 45.4 for Weymouth and Portland and 17.1 for North Dorset. This is a reduction of 11.6 per cent for West Dorset since 1998-2000, compared with 7.6 per cent for Dorset and 9.1 per cent for England²⁹.

The highest cause of premature death in the district is from cardio-vascular disease, closely followed by cancer. This is reflected nationally but at a lower rate for cardiovascular disease than for England.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A Health inequalities are increasing** because people on lower incomes, particularly in rurally isolated areas may have limited access to leisure activities and other opportunities and facilities that benefit health and wellbeing. These inequalities are often 'hidden' in more affluent areas (see also transport and accessibility). Some people are not aware of the financial benefits entitlements to which they are entitled and which would help improve their wellbeing
- B The present health and social care provision (by community, voluntary and statutory sectors) is not resourced to cope with an increasing and ageing population**, which will need more support for carers and more services for older people for example preventing accidents for example slips and trips and supporting independent living for longer (see also housing)
- C There are many people with mental health problems living in the community** who need support to find employment and access other services and facilities, for example walking for health in the local countryside (see also culture and leisure)
- D Although the reporting of discrimination is low in the district**, there is a need to promote greater awareness and understanding towards different health issues, for example negative attitudes to people with mental health problems (see also communities section)
- E It is often the case that those who could gain most from the benefits of accessing the coast and countryside** (physical activity and mental well-being)

have the greatest difficulty in using it, for example because of transport, or physical access

- F The number of people with obesity and eating disorders is increasing** – healthy lifestyles with good access to cultural and recreational facilities can help reduce health and social problems. Developing supportive environments for living healthy lifestyles is important – for example limiting fast food restaurants near to schools and increasing the use of healthy local foods (see also economic wellbeing)
- G Smoking, drug and alcohol misuse is often hidden** – this is also linked to other issues such as teenage pregnancy, underage sales of alcohol, domestic violence and crime-related problems (see also safer communities)
- H The sparse rural areas and road network can make responding to medical emergencies more difficult.** Alternative measures such as Community First Responder volunteers and the Co-responder scheme run by Dorset Fire and Rescue and South West Ambulance Trust are an important method of improving access to medical services

Key aims

- 1 Focus effort and support on people who experience the worst health to reduce social and health inequalities
- 2 Help people understand and use the benefits they are entitled to and advice that is available to them
- 3 Improve care in people's homes to support independent living
- 4 Provide more support and improved respite opportunities for carers, and their dependants, of all ages
- 5 Support work to help vulnerable people by closer working across agencies and improve data sharing
- 6 Encourage and support community health and leisure initiatives that can help resource, improve and promote healthy and active lives, for example walking, cycling, countryside volunteering, working on allotments and using play areas
- 7 Develop new ways of supporting people who find it difficult to access health and wellbeing services, for example bringing health services/clinics into villages, using technologies as alternatives to traditional methods and looking at transport options

Culture and leisure

There is a strong informal provision, for example where local sports clubs and amateur dramatic societies play an important part in their local communities. Cultural activities, sport and recreation can bring communities together and improve both physical and mental wellbeing.

A good example of a community initiative was the opening of the Dorchester Skatepark in April 2009. It has proved a huge success and is suitable for BMX, scooters and inline skates as well as skateboards. Although the majority of users are teenagers it is proving popular with older skateboarders as well.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A** Whilst West Dorset has limited access to some formal entertainment, art and cultural provision compared to other districts³⁰, there are a number of professional visual artist, performers and writers based in the area. Community groups also run a range of cultural, sport and leisure activities. Taking part in cultural and leisure activities can have positive benefits to both physical and mental wellbeing (see also health and wellbeing)
- B** Local clubs and societies play an important part in providing many facilities and opportunities, particularly in the more rural areas. However many people increasingly have less spare time to volunteer or money to support or take part in these activities. This can also be hindered by increasing administration (such as criminal record bureau checks and risk assessments), which are needed to ensure everyone is safe when taking part in activities (see also supporting our local communities)
- C** The natural environment and open spaces also offers a range of activities in the form of walking, cycling and other land and sea based opportunities, as well as environmental volunteering. Although these are usually free some areas are not accessible to all, for example to those in wheelchairs (see also environment)
- D** Some places do not have a community hall or venue, or the existing facility is in need of improvement to cater for a wider range of cultural and leisure uses
- E** Some parts of the district have poor digital/television, radio reception and broadband – so they cannot benefit from the services available which can increase isolation (see also economic wellbeing)

- F** The Olympics 2012 will provide opportunities for enhancing training, participation in (for example through working or volunteering) and skills in the arts, sport and languages as a long term legacy. This can add positive benefits for both physical and mental wellbeing (see also economic wellbeing and supporting our local communities)

Key aims

- 1 Maintain, strengthen, support and promote the provision and access to cultural, sports and leisure facilities and opportunities for everyone
Improve cultural, sport and leisure provision for children and young people, including transport and access to facilities (such as youth shelters, play and activity areas, skateparks) for all ages and those with disabilities
- 2 Ensure that barriers to participation, particularly cost and transport and physical access, are recognised and addressed where possible
- 3 Increase access to lifelong learning opportunities, including through music, visual arts, craft and languages
- 4 Improve information about cultural, sport and leisure – for example by supporting local libraries and community learning centres, youth centres and advice and information centres as community resources
- 5 Encourage and support the use of schools, pubs, fire stations, and housing association communal halls and churches as venues for community activities, and help provide necessary equipment (either in-place or mobile) for arts performances and sport use
- 6 Lobby for improved radio and television receptions, including improved digital coverage
- 7 Identify areas where the 2012 Olympics and assets such as the World Heritage Site and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty can generate lasting community benefits



Supporting our local communities

There are many strong communities in the district where volunteers take active roles in their localities and improve people's lives by working together for the benefits of the local area. Eighty four per cent of residents feel that people treat each other with respect and consideration (compared with 73 per cent across Dorset)³¹.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A Social isolation can occur when people are unable to use community facilities and interact with others because of limited local or remote facilities and services** (including phone boxes and broadband). Success stories of renewed facilities can be found including the opening of a community shop in Thorncombe and the reopening of the Wise Man Inn in West Stafford under new management following a fire, and the development of Tea and Chat scheme to support isolated people (run by Churches Together in Bridport)
- B Fewer people are involved in local decision making** – particularly voting in elections or volunteering for town or parish council seats. Increasingly there are other ways of being involved in local decision making, for example developing parish plans. Only 34 per cent³² of people agreed that they can influence local decision making. This compares with 31 per cent across Dorset and 28 per cent for all districts in England
- C Limited participation of minority groups in public life** – although the number of people from minority groups may be relatively small it is important that all communities have a say in public life
- D There is an increasing need for support and advice for voluntary and community groups** (including organisations hosting volunteers) – particularly given the increasing legal / liability concerns (for example health and safety requirements). There is likely to be a greater reliance on this sector to deliver services for their communities. Services are currently provided by the voluntary sector, local authorities and regional and national bodies. There will need to be increased support services for these community and voluntary groups
- E People have less spare time or money to volunteer**, for example as people work longer, and increasing administration (for example criminal record bureau checks) can put people off from volunteering in their community (see also culture and leisure). Volunteering is also important as it can provide work experience to support people getting into employment

- F There is a need to promote more sustainable lifestyles to protect our local communities for the future.** In the light of reducing natural resources (such as oil) it is important to support communities becoming self sustaining where relevant (such as local food, energy production, wildlife projects and volunteering)

Key aims

- 1 Support joined up services in local centres, for example post offices in local pubs; joint oil deliveries in communities; community information and activity hubs
- 2 Increase community participation in decision making, particularly through the local area partnerships and parish plans. Include particular emphasis on encouraging involvement of minority groups and those under-represented in public life – for example disabled people, young people and those from ethnic minorities
- 3 Support intergenerational and multicultural activities to allow everyone to make a positive contribution to society
- 4 Support communities and volunteers by building capacity through training and advice for example on funding and legislation
- 5 Ensure there is equal access across the district to support and advice for voluntary and community groups
- 6 Support volunteering opportunities to strengthen community activities, and well as offering experience as a pathway to employment
- 7 Work together and share best practice to support local groups to develop sustainable solutions to enable communities to be more self-sufficient and resilient - for example: supporting local services within communities, Transition Towns, renewable energy projects and garden-share



Protecting and enhancing our environment

West Dorset has an amazing environment, with outstanding landscapes, a world-renowned heritage coastline, and many historic and attractive towns and villages. Sometimes this can be taken for granted, and 'the environment' doesn't feature strongly in many parish plans.

A large proportion of the district is designated as the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (71 per cent), which gives a degree of statutory protection. There are 58 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, around 750 sites of Nature Conservation Interest, over 6,000 listed buildings and around 1,000 scheduled monuments. There are currently 79 designated conservation areas in the district recognising the need to protect the local distinctiveness of the area.

Specific issues in West Dorset include:

- A Climate change and the issue of peak oil is a key risk to our communities**, including increased fuel and other product costs, flooding and coastal erosion, and more extreme forms of weather. We need to ensure that both existing communities and new developments are protected
- B Greater renewable energy generation is needed** – some technologies may harm the natural beauty of the area, historic interest or important habitats and species, but alternative solutions are needed to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and reduce carbon emissions (see also housing) so sites have to be assessed for appropriateness
- C Notable decline in landscape quality and wildlife habitats and species in certain areas.** For example, over the last 50 years, traditional grasslands have been lost due to intensification of farming practices³³. Future climate change is also likely to have a significant impact
- D Intensive or high levels of development could lead to loss of local character and large areas of countryside** unless sympathetically designed and located
- E Visitor pressure can damage the sensitive sites that they come to see** – such as littering, and the impacts of traffic. The quality, cleanliness of and access to some of our public space needs improving
- F The natural landscape offers sustainable tourism and health benefits and opportunities** including the World Heritage Site and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see also economic wellbeing)

- G Current landfill sites are filling up** – although we have one of the highest recycling levels in Dorset, we still send well over one half of our waste to landfill and space is now limited

Key aims

- 1 Support initiatives that reduce the causes of climate change and the impact of peak oil, promoting adaptation to evolving environmental effects and more sustainable lifestyles
- 2 Halt the decline of biodiversity, for example promoting traditional management practices that benefit wildlife (such as coppicing and hedge laying); and by supporting local community spaces and projects, such as community orchards and wildlife gardens
- 3 Promote and develop communities in ways that enhance our heritage and protect environmental quality and foster a sense of place. Protect those features places and spaces which make a place locally distinctive in both towns and the countryside
- 4 Where possible use previously developed land in towns and villages before allowing development on the surrounding countryside
- 5 Support the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable land-use sector that protects the most productive agricultural land and the quality of the groundwater and surface watercourses
- 6 Ensure tourism and recreation is environmentally sustainable.
- 7 New developments should be sustainable, avoid causing pollution and include facilities to generate renewable energy.
- 8 Support action to reduce, reuse, recycle or recover waste and minimise littering
- 9 Maintain the coastal and marine environment through sustainable coastal management, including supporting measures to reduce flooding such as community flood wardens



References and glossary

- ¹ 2008 Mid-Year Estimates, Office of National Statistics
- ² 2008 Mid-Year Estimates, Office of National Statistics
- ³ 2006-based Subnational Population Projections (SNPP), Office of National Statistics
- ⁴ 2008 Mid-Year Estimates, Office of National Statistics
- ⁵ Estimated West Dorset resident populations by ethnic group mid-2007 (experimental statistics), Office of National Statistics
- ⁶ The Place Survey 2008 was a national survey which sampled local authority areas on satisfaction of services. The Place Survey only surveyed residents over the age of 18.
- ⁷ Geodiversity is the variety of earth materials and processes that shape the Earth and include minerals, rocks, sediments, fossils, soils and water.
- ⁸ Higher order needs include services which you would not expect to find in smaller villages or towns such as a wide range of shops.
- ⁹ Peak oil is the point in time when the maximum rate of global crude oil removal is reached, after which the rate of production enters terminal decline. The term is used to highlight the need to reduce our reliance on oil and find more sustainable solutions.
- ¹⁰ The Place Survey is a national survey undertaken for local authorities to be undertaken every two years.
- ¹¹ Affordable Housing – Affordable Housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specific eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should: meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices; and include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for any subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. (Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing – November 2006)
- ¹² Place Survey 2008.
- ¹³ Home Truths 2009 National Housing Federation.
- ¹⁴ Private Sector House Conditions Survey 2007, West Dorset District Council.
- ¹⁵ Private Sector House Conditions Survey 2007, West Dorset District Council.
- ¹⁶ The decent home standard is a set of principles which when met make a adequate home including being in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonable modern facilities and services and has effective heating and insulation.
- ¹⁷ 37 per cent of our properties house people over 65, compared to 24 per cent nationally.
- ¹⁸ About 8,345 (19 per cent) of households in the area contain someone identified as having a special need – the national average is 13 per cent. Extra care homes is specific housing for older people where care service are provided or facilitated.
- ¹⁹ Census 2001, Office of National Statistics.
- ²⁰ Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007
- ²¹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007
- ²² West Dorset Economy and Labour Market Profile, 2009, Dorset County Council
- ²³ Median gross weekly pay for full time employees, workplace based, West Dorset Economy and Labour Market Profile 2009, Dorset County Council

- ²⁴ NEETs – Not in Employment, Education or Training.
- ²⁵ Place Survey 2008
- ²⁶ West Dorset Health Profile, 2009, National Health Service
- ²⁷ Place Survey 2008
- ²⁸ Life expectancy at birth by local areas in the UK 2006-2008. Office for National Statistics, October, 2009
- ²⁹ Under-18 Conception rate/1000 population 15-17 years 1998-2000 - 2006-2008 - Office of National Statistics and Teenage Pregnancy Unit (provisional) February 2010.
- ³⁰ The Local Future Groups Study undertaken in 2008, ranked West Dorset as 289th out of 376 authorities in England (<http://www.localfutures.com/Assets/2621/amenities%20barometer-amenities%202008.pdf>)
- ³¹ Place Survey 2008
- ³² Place Survey 2008
- ³³ Landscape Character Assessment 2008, West Dorset District Council





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