

# PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT



Meeting Date: 24 March 2026

## Agenda Item: 8

<b>Subject:</b>	Dorset National Landscape Road Signs
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Sam Dickins, Deputy Town Clerk and Cllr David Robinson
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To consider approaching the Dorset National Landscape organisation regarding signage installation in Wareham.
<b>Background:</b>	Following discussion from members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, there have been calls for considerations to be made to request enhanced signage around A-Roads to promote the Dorset National Landscape.
<b>Key Points:</b>	<p>Appendix A includes narrative around the proposal, as well as scope for signage around Wareham, recommendations regarding potential funding partners and email correspondence from the Dorset National Landscape Manager.</p> <p><b>Funding:</b></p> <p>The Dorset National Landscape Manager has noted in his communication that funding to deliver this directly from the Dorset National Landscape Team is not in place and is unlikely to materialise for some years.</p> <p>Potential alternative partnership funding streams have been suggested to explore, such as the Department for Environmental &amp; Rural Affairs, the National Lottery, other grant bodies or local businesses. Though these are avenues to explore, grant funding cannot always be secured for specific purposes and would require organisational capacity to investigate, engage and secure funding streams if they are available. It should be noted that Wareham Town Council is applying for a sizeable grant from the National Lottery, and it is not accepted by National Lottery for more than one grant to be applied for with a certain timescale.</p> <p>The Dorset National Landscape Manager has suggested that the Town Council may explore resourcing the signage directly. The Town Council does not hold a budget for this purpose and authorising this expenditure would need approval and to be justified against other cost pressures.</p> <p><b>Dorset Council &amp; Dorset National Landscape Buy In:</b></p> <p>Prior to funding being secured, Dorset Council and the Dorset National Landscape team would need to mutually agree to a proposal for the signage.</p> <p>Dorset Council's Highways Teams have noted concerns historically of non-critical signage becoming overly prevalent and leading to distractions, confusion and sign blindness for motorists. The Dorset National Landscape team has also noted its own "decluttering" policy, which may impact the team's willingness to install additional signage.</p> <p>Arrangements for responsibility for ongoing maintenance would also need to be agreed.</p> <p>The above three factors would need to be respectively resolved through engagement with the teams.</p>



	<p><b>Potential Benefits or Unintended Consequences:</b></p> <p>Potential benefits of the proposal include enhancement of the awareness of the Dorset National Landscape adjoining Wareham, potentially increasing Wareham’s profile as a gateway town from which to explore the National Landscape.</p> <p>Additional visibility may support a case to be made that housing development proposals the Town Council has formerly opposed are unsuitable in the Dorset National Landscape, highlighting their location within it.</p> <p>Signage may contribute to an enhanced sense of place and pride locally.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given that, while Wareham adjoins the Dorset National Landscape, the National Landscape is primarily without of Wareham Town Council’s geographic area of responsibility.</p> <p>There may be a risk that the Town Council’s investment of organisational energy and potentially resources serve primarily to entice visitors to the area outside of Wareham, circumventing the Town’s visitor economy in favour of areas located within the Dorset National Landscape.</p> <p><b>Officer Capacity &amp; Timelines:</b></p> <p>Engaging multiple stakeholders to facilitate agreement and identifying and securing external funding for projects can involve a significant amount of officer capacity.</p> <p>The Committee may wish to consider to what extent it wishes for the Council to engage or lead work like this, as well as setting expectations for how quickly this work might be deliverable considering other current Council priorities.</p>
<p><b>Implications:</b></p>	<p><b>Financial:</b> If these signs are not fundable through other organisations and require Council funding, this would constitute an unbudgeted expenditure and require authorisation from the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee or Full Council.</p> <p><b>Unintended negative effects on the local visitor economy:</b> The Town Council’s work in this space may have unforeseen, suboptimal outcomes encouraging visitors outside Wareham.</p> <p><b>Potential missed opportunity to support opposition to less sustainable development:</b> The Town Council failing to engage partners to install National Landscape signage may be a missed opportunity to visibly reinforce the case of unsustainable development’s proximity to and location within the National Landscape.</p> <p><b>Office Capacity and pace of delivery:</b> Engagement with partners and securing funding alongside delivery of other Council priorities may be challenging and require an acceptance that this work may receive less focus during busier periods in the Council’s workflow.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p>	<p>To consider the report and determine whether there is support for additional Dorset National Landscape signage.</p>

## Appendix A

# Proposal for Road signs welcoming visitors to the Dorset National Landscape

At the latest Neighbourhood Plan meeting, it was mentioned that there are now signs on various A-roads as you enter the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. These signs, to quote their announcement, “improve the ‘sense of place’ and the public’s understanding of this area and its boundaries”, and “have been designed to help people to understand that they are entering a very special place”. This agenda item is to propose that we at Wareham adopt similar signage for our own National Landscape: the Dorset National Landscape. This covers a large area of Dorset, but most relevant to Wareham, it covers the Isle of Purbeck, starting at the roundabout next to the Purbeck School, and at the causeway crossing the Frome by the quay.

There are several obvious benefits to bringing attention to the National Landscape:

1. By showing how the landscape begins on the edge of Wareham, it positions Wareham as a place from which to explore the landscape, which may be beneficial for tourism.
2. By illustrating that the landscape starts at the junction with Worgret Road, it helps make the case that many of the proposed houses in the planning consultation are within or adjacent to the National Landscape; this may make it easier for us to make a case in resisting this development.
3. The signs could help foster a sense of civic pride.



The image on the left shows the Cranborne Chase National Landscape sign on an A-road.

The branding of the Dorset National Landscape is standardised and is shown below.

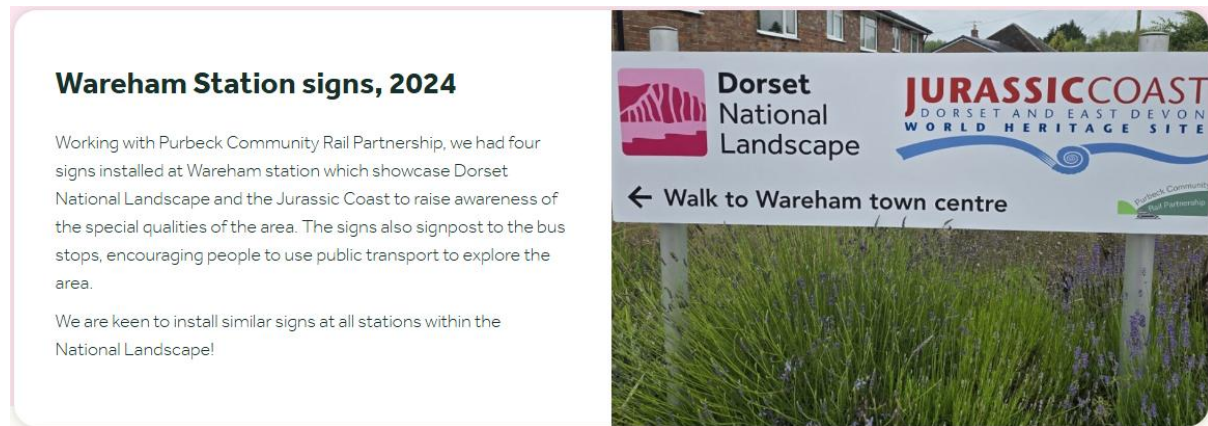


There are two proposals we could choose from:

- An Isle of Purbeck-themed Dorset National Landscape sign, combining the National Landscape iconography with some of our own for Purbeck.
- A standard Dorset National Landscape sign, not combined with a local focus.

A local version offers more control and the chance to brand more locally (for example, “Isle of Purbeck, part of Dorset National Landscape”). On the other hand, a Dorset-wide approach offers chances to coordinate with other communities and share costs.

In 2024, signs were put up for the attention of rail passengers, and you can see how it combines the Dorset National Landscape brand with other tourist imagery.

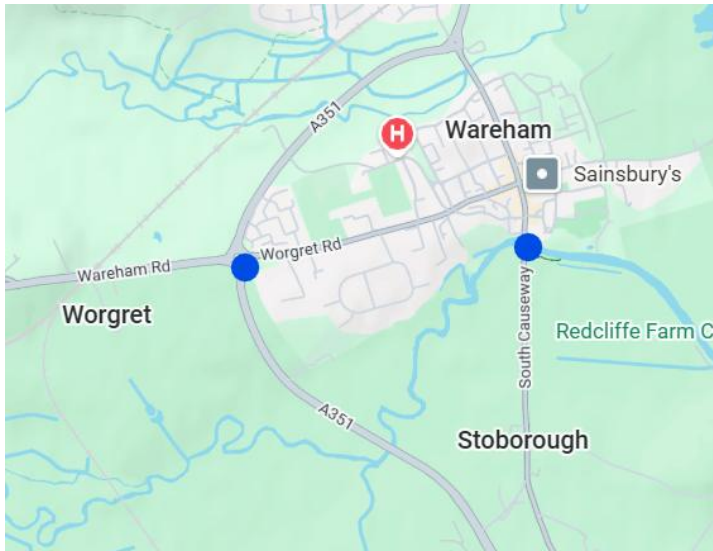


The Cranborne Chase signs were part-funded by Defra, although I’ve also heard that the National Lottery contributed funding as well. We could explore funding with a number of partners including other grant bodies or local businesses.

The map below shows the location of the Dorset National Landscape.



There are two obvious places to put the welcome signs: these are as you enter the National Landscape from Wareham. Namely, at the roundabout exit next to Purbeck school, and as you cross the bridge over the Frome towards Stoborough. See blue dots on map below.



I have reached out to the Dorset National Landscape Partnership and their mostly positive response is in Appendix 1.

### Proposed resolution

That the committee decides upon whether to introduce the Dorset National Landscape road signs, and agree on locations.

Assign an action for liaising with Dorset Council and the National Landscape Partnership regarding signage ownership/ responsibility, and seek sponsorship from local businesses or national/local grant bodies.

### References:

[cranbornechase.org.uk/new-road-signs-in-wiltshire/](http://cranbornechase.org.uk/new-road-signs-in-wiltshire/)

[dorset-nl.org.uk/improving-signage/](http://dorset-nl.org.uk/improving-signage/)

[dorset-nl.org.uk/resources/management-plan-2026-31/](http://dorset-nl.org.uk/resources/management-plan-2026-31/)

[dorset-nl.org.uk/contact/](http://dorset-nl.org.uk/contact/)

## Appendix 1: Email from Dorset National Landscape Partnership office to Cllr Robinson, 18/03/26

Dear David

Thanks for your call to my colleague Caroline, in relation to gateway signs for the Dorset National Landscape and your desire for one in the Wareham area.

It's something we've talked about over the years but has never been a high priority for the Partnership and it consequently hasn't led through to investment of time or budget from the team. We know several other National Landscapes have done something of this sort, including our two nearest neighbours (East Devon & Cranborne Chase). If you feel that the Partnership ought to be making it a higher priority, please say so and we can dedicate some Partnership time to considering a proposal. Wareham TC is represented on the Partnership Board through DAPTC, although following the sad passing of Peter Bowyer we don't as yet have a Purbeck-located named representative.

There's quite a lot to resolve on projects of this kind (which roads get signs, which don't; design; installation one-off costs; maintenance responsibilities; relationship with Dorset Highways signage policy; acknowledgement of our own 'decluttering' policy on signage, etc), and we don't in the short to medium term have any budget to put towards it.

If Wareham Town Council wanted to identify as a 'Dorset National Landscape town' or gateway town and would like to erect signage with your own resources to that effect, we could provide our logo/other design assets to assist.

Best wishes

Tom



**Dorset  
National  
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