Normally at this time of year we’d be gearing up for a spring/summer of community engagement and surveying, as well as planning ahead for investigations, project delivery and monitoring. Obviously current events are having a significant effect on that across the partnership, which we have touched on below, but we have chosen to use this edition to celebrate the successes of the last few months too. We hope you enjoy the positive news stories— if you have one to share for future editions, please let us know.

Like many of you, the Catchment Partnership team is working out the best way to support our colleagues and friends across Dorset and keep the wheels of the partnership’s work turning. We know this is an uncertain time for everyone, and are keen to support where we can. We thought it may be useful to provide a current snapshot of how partners are working during this time, although obviously this is a rapidly changing picture. As far as we are aware at time of press:

- **Dorset Wildlife Trust:** Most operational staff furloughed from 1st April with more following 1st May. Senior directors working as normal. Gillingham Royal Forest project on hold.
- **National Trust:** Some project staff being furloughed from 8th April, affecting Purbeck Beaver Project and others.
- ** Wessex Water:** Some investigations on hold, with catchment advisors not making routine site/farm visits. Pollution responses continuing as normal.
- **BCP and Dorset Councils:** Most officers working from home, but otherwise minimal disruption.
- **FWAG SW and NFU:** Advisors not making farm visits but providing advice remotely.
- **CSF, Natural England and Environment Agency:** Advisors not making farm visits but still providing advice remotely. Desk-based work continuing as normal. EA have welcomed Keith Calder as the new Catchment Co-ordinator for Dorset and the Hampshire Avon (more details below).

Generally, partner organisations are offering staff increased flexible working which is great to see. We are reflecting this where we can with increased flexibility of working methods and meeting times. If we can do more, please let us know. Our thoughts and best wishes are with those directly affected by all these working practice changes, particularly by the furlough process which can happen suddenly for those concerned. Please continue to keep us updated as working arrangements change and, if there is additional support the Catchment Partnership team can offer, please do get in touch.

### Purbeck Heaths– the new ‘Super’ National Nature Reserve

The UK’s first ‘super’ National Nature Reserve (NNR) has been created on the Purbeck Heaths in Dorset. Seven partners, including our co-hosts Dorset Wildlife Trust, have worked together to increase the protected area to 3331ha. The NNR will ‘knit’ together 11 types of priority habitat, enabling wildlife to move more easily across the landscape, and combines three existing NNRs at Stoborough Heath, Hartland Moor and Studland and Godlington Heath. The result is the country’s largest lowland heath NNR providing a landscape-scale haven more than 3 times its original size—similar to the size of Blackpool. This is an excellent example of ‘bigger, better, more joined up’. For more information please click here.

### Environment Agency’s new Catchment Coordinator

Welcome to Keith Calder, our new EA Catchment Coordinator for Dorset and the Hampshire Avon, who started 23rd March. Keith has been living in New Zealand, working most of his career in earth sciences and conservation activity. Keith was the catchment coordinator for the Porirua Harbour catchment for over 11 years with a major part of his last role implementing an estuary and catchment strategy plan. You can read more about the Porirua Harbour catchment and what is being done to protect it here. Keith is new to Dorset, although he is getting ‘virtually’ acquainted with it quickly. He is looking for opportunities to get to know the catchment better, so if you have any projects or information which may be of interest please let him know. Keith.calder@environment-agency.gov.uk

www.stourcatchment.co.uk | info@stourcatchment.co.uk
Voice for Dorset Publication—Dorset LNP

The Dorset LNP have recently published ‘Voices for Dorset’, Dorset’s response to Defra’s 25 year environment plan. The publication adds a practical element to the plan and what this means for Dorset. It is designed to be an illustrative narrative that explains the value of the natural environment and how in practice its works for people, business and nature. Each section is written by chosen experts in the relevant field and includes recommendations for an effective Nature Recovery Network, investments in soils and habitats, a more joined up approach between government departments and support for farmers and landowners. If you have any queries please contact info@dorsetlnp.org.uk To download to full document click here.

Challenges and Choices Consultation

The Catchment Partnership team is putting the finishing touches to our response to the EA’s Challenges and Choices consultation. Thank you to everyone who has provided information and viewpoints to help inform our response; the final version will be published on our website for you to read in due course. The response reflects the breadth of the partnership and the interests and concerns across our collective work.

There is still time for you to respond individually or as an organisation, and we encourage you to do so. The consultation deadline for responses is 24th April. Please follow the link here for further information.

Dorset AONB—Natural Flood Management on the River Asker

Even the horrid weather in February didn’t deter the River Asker’s volunteers. A number of events were held over the winter including a ‘have-a-go’ river restoration session which attracted 20 new volunteers to help out with scrub clearance and opening up rivers banks to encourage more light in to benefit fish and invertebrate species.

The community has also taken advantage of the poor weather by attending a talk by Andy Thomas of the Wild Trout Trust with a great turn out of over 80 people.

Natural Flood Management to help ‘slow the flow’ of water in the catchment has been introduced at the headwaters of the River Asker with Nick Grey and Steve Oliver from Dorset Wildlife Trust and Dominic Stubbings of the Frome, Piddle and West Dorset Fisheries Association driving the work forward alongside volunteers helping in Askerwell.

The AONB has also undertaken a walk-over of the Walditch Stream to identify issues and potential catchment solutions there, and continue to support the communities in the Char valley to start their own community river project. If you would like more information or to get involved in any of the projects please contact Ian Rees ian.rees@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

The Ospreys are back

The Birds of Poole Harbour have announced that the Nest Cam is now live in time for the 2020 breeding season. You can now continue to bird watch from the comfort of your own home and garden. https://www.birdsofpooleharbour.co.uk/osprey/osprey-webcams/