

Access and Recreation

The quality and variety of the Dorset Coast make it an important resource for many different forms of sport and recreation. The range of activities has greatly increased in recent years, offering new challenges for those taking part – and for those who manage the coast and its inshore waters. There will be a continuing need to keep the balance between different activities, the environment, coastal development and other users of the coast.

Coastal Recreation: Need and Trends

Recreation, to many, is a vitally important part of life. It not only provides an activity of interest but contributes to our health and well-being. People have high expectations of the quality of their leisure experiences, and the Dorset coast provides a rich and varied range of opportunities.

Detailed trends in coastal recreation are difficult to establish, there is only provided

limited information for local policy making. It is generally accepted that participation in countryside and water recreation is on the increase with the most marked trend of the last 10 years in the growth of active coast and water recreation including sports such as scuba diving, kayaking, kite surfing, climbing and power-boating.

The British Marine Industry Federation (BMIF) estimate that in 2009 13.2 million people (26.3%) regularly undertook some form of

water sport. Approximately 26 million tourists visit the South West region per year generating between £4-8 billion of income. Nearly 40% of adults in the region spend some of their leisure time in the water.

The Regulators

European

- [Bathing Water Directive \(2006\)](#) - sets water quality standards for bathing beaches. This will also replace the 1976 Bathing Water Directive from 2014.
- [Recreational Craft Regulations \(2004\)](#)
- [Recreational Craft Directive \(1998\)](#) sets safety and environmental design standards for certain types of recreational boats.
- Other European directives on wildlife and environment may have indirect

National

[Policy Planning Guidance Notes \(PPG 17 - Sport & Recreation\)](#) provides guidance on local authority planning policy. DETR have a lead role in setting local authority byelaw powers and ratifying byelaw



Bathing at Swanage. Copyright: Dorset Coast Forum

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proposals, and are currently reviewing these powers.

Sport England provides advice and grants aid and administers the National Lottery Sports Fund. Sport England and Physical Activity Network work together to encourage adults and children to take up more recreational sports during their leisure time.

Natural England can influence management decisions within designated areas with regards to sustainable development.

National Governing Bodies of Sport are voluntary organisations, though many take a lead role in setting standards and regulating competitive activity, and representing the general interests of their sport. British Marine Industries Federation represents the recreational boating industry.

County

Harbour authorities have byelaw making powers to ensure safety of navigation, which can include speed limits and restrictions on specific activities. Each harbour has its own byelaws.

Portland Harbour

[Harbour Management Plan](#) essentially describes an overview of the Harbour and the activities that presently take place in the various areas.

Poole Harbour

[Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan](#)

looks at ways of maintaining sustainable levels of economic and social activity within the Harbour and its hinterland, while protecting its natural environment. It considers the activities of all those involved in the development, management and use of the Harbour within a framework that facilitates the integration of their interests and responsibilities.

Christchurch Harbour

[The Christchurch Harbour and Waterways Management Plan](#) provides a framework for management through promoting the area's safe and sustainable use, whilst balancing the demands on the natural resources. The Plan also tries to address ways in which to minimise risks and resolve any conflicts of interests.

Dorset County Authorities have statutory responsibility for rights of way.

[Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan](#) set overall planning policy for Dorset.

Local Plans regulate development. District and Unitary Councils have some powers to make byelaws for coastal and water recreation

Dorset's Coastal Recreational Resource

The South West Coast Path and the main amenity beaches are significant coastal

recreational activities. For water-based recreation activities have become concentrated around the urban areas of the coast.



Windsurfing at Portland. Copyright: Mark Simons

The 2012 Olympic sailing events in Weymouth & Portland has inspired the growth of recreational water sports in what the Royal Yachting Association has credited as the best waters for sailing in Northern Europe. The Olympics will bring many tourists and water sport enthusiasts to the area, facilitating a significant financial boost for the local economy. The Olympics has made it possible to build the Weymouth Relief Road, built to diminish journey times and queues to and from Weymouth & Portland, especially in the active period around and during the games.

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Activities in Dorset's coastal zone

Bathing /Beach Recreation

Dorset has **50** bathing beaches which are used for swimming and informal recreation. There are 8 'bathing only' zones set up for public safety. The main resort beaches are vitally important to tourism and attract an intense level of activity, mainly during the summer period, whilst rural beaches provide quieter sites. However, these sites are seeing an increase in activity, especially for sports such as paddle boarding and kite surfing.

Importance: Regional/National

Climbing

Climbing is a fast-growing sport nationally, and there has been particular growth in demand for artificial indoor climbing walls, and for 'sports climbing', which uses routes with pre-prepared, fixed bolts in outdoor rock faces.

Climbing opportunities in Dorset are limited to the hard limestone cliffs of Purbeck and Portland. However the activity has become very popular and continues to grow. Seasonal and route restrictions have been agreed in Purbeck to avoid conflict with nesting birds. The majority of climbers accept them, and the scheme is monitored through an annual climbing forum. There are three quarries close to the South West path at Swanage, which have become increasingly popular. The 3 venues now have a total of 160 routes.

Portland has experienced rapid growth in sports climbing, following national publication of new climbing guides. There are now approximately 600 sport routes with fixed bolts which have been put in place in the last decade. Lack of co-ordination between promotion and management has led to a number of issues ranging from impacts on nesting birds and cliff vegetation (particularly the nationally important Portland sea-lavender) to local parking problems. Moves are now underway to try and address these through a similar programme to that established in Purbeck.

A mobile climbing wall service is now operating in Dorset. **Importance: Regional/National**

Cycling

Dorset has experienced a growth in demand for recreational cycling, following the accepted national trends. The main facilities for cycling are quiet rural roads and bridleways. Some parts of the coast path, including the Ridgeway are bridleways and suitable for off-road cycling – but most of the path is footpath only. A Purbeck Cycle Path is promoted (Priest's Way and Purbeck Way), providing a circuit of Purbeck on lanes and bridleways. There is an ongoing background of problems of nuisance and damage from mountain-bike use on coastal footpaths and effective awareness raising is needed. There is continued restricted access for bicycles on South West trains which conflicts with the

promoting of cycling in the local area.

Importance: Regional

Golf

Golf is experiencing continued growth in popularity. At present there are 10 golf courses located in the coastal zone in Dorset, with an additional 22 courses further inland. The Sports Council's golf strategy identified countywide issues regarding the accessibility of facilities for the beginner and casual golfer. Development pressures for new and expanded facilities are controlled by the planning system, and new golf courses are now subject to environmental impact assessment. **Importance: Local/Regional**

Hang-gliding and Paragliding

Hang-gliding and paragliding has been a localised minority activity on the coast for over many years. The main clubs are located out-of-county, and use sites in West Dorset, Portland, Kimmeridge and Bournemouth when weather conditions are suitable. Although a minority activity, there are safety concerns where take-off and landing areas are open to the public, and this has led to a local ban at Charmouth during the main season. Erosion at launch sites and disturbance to cliff-nesting birds is a concern on Portland, and a zoning scheme has been agreed with the main association who use the Island. **Importance: Local/Regional**

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Personal Watercraft (Jet-skis)

Personal watercrafts (commonly known as jet-skis) are popular forms of recreation on the Dorset Coast. Their use particularly centres on urban areas, and they make considerable use of Poole Harbour (where a zone is set aside for them), Studland and Swanage Bays. They also launch and navigate off the beaches in the conurbation and at Weymouth.

Jet-skiing is probably the most controversial recreational use of the coast, and has attracted national attention from the media in a campaign to ban them. Concerns about their use vary, and range from noise disturbance to people, disturbance to wildlife and safety concerns where the craft mix with swimmers or other water users. Such concerns are often strongly held, and taken together have made the task of finding conflict-free coastal sites for the activity very difficult. **Importance: Local/Regional**

Power Boating

Power boating is a popular activity centred on the main resorts, with the Royal Motor Yacht Club organising annual races at Weymouth, Poole and Bournemouth, with the annual Youth National Powerboat Championship being held in Dorset. In West Dorset the activity centres on the powerboat club at Lyme Regis. As with other fast moving watercraft there are both noise and safety implications associated with the use of the

craft in the near shore area. **Importance: Regional/National**

Sailing

Sailing is a well established pastime around the Dorset Coast. The strongholds of both yacht and dinghy sailing in Dorset are Poole and Portland Harbour, with over 6,000 yacht berths and moorings. There is also significant activity centred on Swanage and Christchurch and a large marina at Weymouth. This is set to increase with worldwide Olympic sailing teams visiting Portland to train. Lyme Regis has a small fleet of resident yachts and an active dinghy sailing club. Christchurch harbour has several boatyards and sailing clubs. The east of the County is a popular destination for cruising yachts, with demand enhanced by yachts visiting from the yachting stronghold of the Solent, and to a lesser extent by foreign yachts. Studland and the area south of Brownsea Island are popular anchorages for day cruising.

The coast west of Poole is exposed, with limited shelter at Swanage, Weymouth and West Bay. There is regular cruising activity between Poole and Weymouth. The natural barrier of Portland limits cruising further west. The extent of visitor moorings in Dorset is also limited, and some of the smaller harbour moorings are for residents only. This can cause some problems for sailors in the west of the county, with no available moorings between Portland and Devon. **Importance:**

Regional/National for Yachting National for Dinghy Sailing



Sailing at Portland. Copyright; Mark Simons

Sea Angling

Sea Angling is widespread in Dorset, from both shore and boat. The common law right of fishing in the sea means that the sport is exempt from licence, unlike freshwater fishing. The single most significant site is Chesil Beach, which is a nationally and internationally recognised beach angling venue. Boscombe Pier is an important venue along the Dorset coast for disabled anglers: as a result several competitions are held there annually. The extent of sea angling on some sites has a potential impact on fish populations inshore, and the extent of litter, and discarded and lost tackle continues to remain an issue. **Importance: Regional (Chesil Beach: National/International)**

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Scuba Diving

Dorset is a popular dive area, and is nationally advertised within the diving press. However, there are 3 main reasons why Dorset (mainly Portland) has seen a decline in diver numbers: the sinking of HMS Scylla in Plymouth, a more accessible launching facility in West Bay and the ban on diving HMS Hood. There are also fears that the 2012 Olympics could decrease visiting diver numbers as boat movement is restricted. This could potentially be rectified by the wreck-to-reef project planned for Portland. Clubs visiting with their own dive boats also add to the level of activity. The greatest activity centres on Portland, with two main dive schools, and is a popular area for training dives. There are also dive charters operating out of Swanage, Weymouth, Poole, West Bay and Lyme Regis.

There are a number of popular shore diving sites on the coast, and Chesil Cove and Swanage Pier both have a national reputation as safe sites for training.

Diving can create additional pressure at slipways at peak times. The relatively small number of popular dive sites, can become crowded on summer weekends, with boats queuing to use sites at times. As technical diving increases in popularity, new, deeper dive sites are being explored, therefore attracting a new calibre of divers. There are potential impacts to wildlife and underwater archaeology from diving activities; however

the efforts of sports divers are also a potential resource to help improve our knowledge of the marine environment, with projects such as SeaSearch. **Importance: Regional/National**



Diving in Dorset. Copyright: Seasearch

Surfing/Paddle Boarding

Surfing is a relatively new sport on the Dorset Coast, but has become popular with local surfers at Bournemouth, Highcliffe, Kimmeridge and Lyme Regis when the weather allows. Although surf is often small and messy during summer months, it is generally after winter storms that conditions are more suitable. In 2009, Europe's first artificial reef was opened at Bournemouth. Currently the surfing conditions appear to be less consistent than before the reef was built and the site is not particularly suitable for beginners. However, technical solutions are being developed to rectify the initial problems. If successful this creation should see an

increase in both local and visiting surfers especially during the summer months. Paddle boarding is a new activity that is increasing with popularity, as it is ideal for Dorset's local inshore water conditions, especially sheltered places such as Kimmeridge and Weymouth Bay. **Importance: Regional (Portland Harbour: National/International)**

Walking

Walking is the most popular of all recreational activities on the Dorset Coast, with an estimated 1 million people walking part of the South West Coast Path annually. Most visitors to Dorset will spend some time walking along the coast, or at one of the many natural attractions, whilst most residents will make short repeated visits throughout the year. The South West Coast Path provides a continuous route along the coast from Poole westwards, although there are continued problems in dealing with slippage and coastal erosion of the route in West Dorset, which highlights the particular need for long term coastal maintenance and protection. It is now possible to walk the whole length of the coast from Chewton Bunny to Sandbanks.

Importance: National/International

Water Skiing/Wakeboarding

Three water skiing clubs are registered with the British Water Ski and Wakeboard Federation based in Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Poole. Numbers in each of the clubs have remained steady over the last few years, but has increased slightly as wakeboarding

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becomes a more popular sport with young people. There is a designated area for water-skiing and wakeboarding in Poole Harbour established in 1995 through the Aquatic Management Plan which is used frequently. On the open coast, water skiing tends to be undertaken principally in the resort areas of Bournemouth, Swanage, Weymouth and Lyme Regis. **Importance: Regional**

Windsurfing/Kite surfing

Wind surfing is mainly limited to the accessible beaches on the coast. There are popular sites at the beaches in Poole and Christchurch Bays, but the most significant site is Portland Harbour. Here the combination of strong south westerly winds, together with the shelter afforded by Chesil Beach can provide unusual conditions, which allow high speeds to be reached. The site is therefore very well used when the conditions are right, and is a venue for high-level competitions. It is also becoming ever more popular with both local and visiting kite surfers with the hope to attract more high level competitions. There has been some conflict of use as kite surfing is faster and more agile than wind surfing and can cover more ground. Erosion of sensitive shingle vegetation has been a concern, addressed by installing wooden walkways to the beach. **Importance: Regional (Portland Harbour: National/International)**

Other Activities

There are a number of other activities where the Dorset Coast provides opportunities for local and smaller-scale activities.

Canoeing/Kayaking remains a popular activity for school groups and outdoor education centres, as well as individual and small groups of adults. Popular routes include Kimmeridge-Swanage (Jurassic coast) and in Poole Harbour, over to Brownsea Island. Surf kayak has also become popular as small surf conditions are ideal. Kayak fishing is now very popular along the Dorset coast, with more launch sites and good inshore fishing areas making the activity popular with older people. International Canoe Championships are also held in Dorset.



Kayaking. Copyright: Mark Simons

Dorset is one of the few remaining national areas where **Coastal Rowing** takes place.

There are three clubs based in the east of the county which take part in an annual regatta programme for Hampshire and Dorset. There are no designated nudist beaches in Dorset, however **Naturists** do use the remoter parts of Studland Beach - there are localised sensitivities over the activity. Many naturalists tend to go abroad, as the facilities are much better.

Coasteering is a new and extreme way to experience the Dorset coastline. The activity involves swimming, climbing and cliff jumping. There are obvious serious risks to this activity which is possibly why it has become so popular with young people. Because it is such a new sport it is unclear how damaging this sport is to the coastline. However, conflicts similar to those discussed with climbing could occur, and coasteering groups should be aware of any restrictions. Coasteering should be a group activity led by qualified and experienced instructors; however, there are no ways of enforcing this which could lead to damage to the area and accidents. Some companies are also offering eco-coasteering, which focuses more on the geology and wildlife of the coastline.

Coastal Sports Development

The general view of growth in coastal sport and recreation masks much more complicated patterns of change. There is scope to improve sporting opportunities in

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Dorset, and it cannot be taken for granted that sport and recreation will flourish in the best way without assistance. Sports development is the name given to the task of encouraging and promoting sport, and provides one means of helping to integrate future activity with other interests. For coastal recreation, some of the main issues are:

- **Young People**

Research for the BMIF by Southampton Institute suggests that there remains a strong interest in water-sports with some more fashionable than others, by young generations, but it does appear that it is becoming more difficult for many to take part. There are good opportunities to try out water activities, but less scope to continue with them. Organised after-school clubs have declined, and there is increased competition for parents' time to support regular participation. With regards to the recent recession, many water sports are no longer as affordable as before, especially as many require lessons and specific equipment. Heightened concern about safety and security is placing a greater load on youth sports coaches and leaders to gain qualifications and meet the necessary police checks. Unfortunately it does appear that the number of volunteer sport coaches has declined over the last decade.

- **Sporting organisations**

A climate of support for voluntary organisations is important, and where they

exist, they can be valuable in assisting management and representing the needs of their activity. Governing bodies of sport, and sports clubs provide essential organisation and opportunities for many activities, but tend to rely on voluntary effort to survive. The more casual and informal types of recreational activity, such as windsurfing and jet-skiing are generally not club-based and so lack a local organisational structure.

- **All levels of ability**

Dorset produces some top-quality athletes, and water sports are one of the areas where the County's sportsmen and women have excelled in the past and continue to do so. To continue and strengthen this tradition, there is a need to ensure that support and training is available to encourage those with ability to achieve their potential. Weymouth and Portland will inevitably gain from the 2012 Olympics, with more money being put into sailing academies and more young people being encouraged to try a variety of water sports. Governing bodies of sport are in a key position to articulate the needs here.

- **Effective training**

A good structure for providing training and coaching is essential to maintain basic safety standards, and promote performance. The public and private sector schools and centres are important facilities for training in outdoor activities. Clubs also have an important role to play for the more organised forms of activity, but there are challenges to deliver effective

training to the more informal activities such as jet-skiing.

Management Issues

Alongside the promotion and development of sport and recreation, there is a need to address and manage the possible conflicts which arise from regular recreational use. In brief the main areas, which need to be considered, and the issues in Dorset include:

Competition for Space

This is increasing as levels of recreation increase. This can pose a safety issue for some forms of recreation, but it can have a wider effect of reducing the quality of recreational experience – particularly for activities where the remote nature of the coast is part of the attraction. Locations such as Swanage, Studland, Poole Harbour and the near shore areas of the resorts are extremely popular and can become overcrowded at peak times. There are examples of accidents, near misses and nuisance as a result of too many users – or incompatible activities taking place at the same place at the same time.

Liabilities

Private landowners along the coast are concerned about the risk of legal action if a recreational user has an accident on their property, and a number have sought to take out insurance. This has become an issue with

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many landowners who do not encourage recreational activities such as climbing or mountain biking on their land, and can do little to stop unauthorised use. The extent of actual risk is not clear at present.

Safety

Recreation generates the majority of call-outs to the Coastguard and Lifeboats. In 2008, the 35 lifeboat stations in the South West launched 1567 times, with Poole being the busiest, launching 156 times. Other lifeboat stations in Dorset are at Weymouth, Swanage, Lyme Regis, Mudeford and an RNLI beach lifeguard area at Bournemouth. The RNLI lifeguards dealt with 8423 incidents. This shows just how busy local waters have become and brings into question whether enough is being done to regulate safety. Land-based activity is the single largest source of incidents, although most forms of water activity are also represented. The overall levels of incidents are increasing, and the coastal emergency services are continuing to develop awareness campaigns and publications – led by the RNLI's sea safety liaison working group.

Noise

With an increase of water users, motorised air and water sports can be a major source of nuisance in some places. It is an issue at some of Dorset's resort beaches, and on the northern shore of Poole Harbour was a consideration in the location of the jet-ski zone. Small amounts of noisy activity have

the potential to create a disproportionate impact on the tranquillity of the remoter parts of the coast.

Wildlife Damage and Disturbance

This is a potential impact of recreational activities. There is little substantiated evidence of widespread problems in Dorset, but there are localised issues. The main concerns are potential disturbance to cliff nesting birds in Portland and Purbeck due to climbing, air sports and close approaches by water craft. Potential disturbance of Little Terns nesting on Chesil Beach requires an active warden presence. Direct damage due to recreational access is a pressure on the coast path and other well used rights of way. It's also a concern for other activities at well used sites – angling at Chesil and windsurfing at Ferrybridge have required specific management measures to be introduced.

Litter

Litter is a continuing problem on the Dorset coast and a proportion of it is attributable to recreational sources. Continued awareness raising within beach visitors, sailors and anglers appears to be required. The Marine Litter Summit of 2009 continues to raise the profile of marine litter, and looked to find ways to tackle sources of marine litter and minimise its input. The summit also showed just how complex marine litter is as it deals with cross-borders and international issues. However, with an increase in recreational activity along the coast and inshore waters inevitably this

will lead to an increase in litter especially with lost or broken kit being left.

Sewage Pollution

It remains legal to discharge sewage from recreational vessels. However, disposal of sewage from boats should be discouraged and if necessary prohibited i.e. in areas of weak tidal movement. Disposal of sewage must occur as far from the shoreline as possible. There are localised concerns at both Studland and south of Brownsea about the impact of flushing boat toilets on busy days, and resulting beach pollution. If possible boat users are encouraged to use on-shore facilities. Elsewhere the levels of discharge may not be sufficient to cause noticeable problems - however as the general quality of Dorset's sewage discharges improves, it is desirable to remove as many other sources of sewage discharge as possible. With the Bathing Water Directive 2006, more scientific knowledge and management came into force, with an increase in annual water testing. Several - but not all - ports and marinas in Dorset currently offer pump-out facilities for recreational craft and Wessex Water have offered free connections to the sewage system for sites who wish to install them. Many yachts do not have the necessary holding tanks fitted to use these facilities at present.

Promoting Coastal Recreation

Sport and recreation are already actively promoted in Dorset by the private sector,

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tourism interests and some local authorities. Promotion has an important role in shaping future activity on the Dorset Coast, and in addition to the messages given by general tourism. Organisations involved in managing recreation could benefit from involvement promotional activities and publications about recreation in Dorset. Portland is an example where lack of such contact has led to unnecessary levels of conflict between climbers, wildlife and locals. Co-operation between managers, promoters, authors and publishers is a practical means of improving the overall management of coastal recreation by:

Much of today's information is sourced from the internet, which enables better accuracy in information, more information stored in one place and it can be kept up-to-date more easily. However, the opposite of this can happen, leading to misinterpretation of information.

- Ensuring areas promoted for new activities are capable of sustaining them;
- Agreeing management measures to avoid conflicts before they arise;
- Delivering safety, environmental and other management information to recreational users in a positive way – before they visit a site and take part in activities.

Management Techniques

Almost all forms of coastal recreation demand some level of management. In many cases the needs may be limited to the provision of basic access facilities, and the management issues revolve around the quality of the facilities provided. Some coastal activities require a more active approach: intensive beach and water activities often bring with them a need for staff to ensure safety and deal with conflicts.

A range of techniques are available to help try and ensure that enjoyable recreational activity is available to those that want it, and to reduce conflicts where they occur. Some of the main mechanisms include:

Recreational facilities

Recreational facilities need to be provided to support activities in appropriate places. The aim should be for these to be managed and maintained at a high standard. For water based recreation, there is a particular need to focus management on the **public slipways** and launch points which are focal points for many users.

Self regulation through clubs

Self-regulation through clubs can be very effective. Groups of users are often the best regulators of their own activities, working to guidance and codes of conduct issued by the governing body of their sport, and there are several good examples of schemes in Poole

Harbour and elsewhere. With better safety equipment, these boundaries are being pushed especially in the diving sector, which has seen a small increase in diving related accidents.

Codes of Conduct

Conduct codes are produced by most of the national sports associations and organisations such as the BMIF have produced codes of conduct, which outline acceptable behaviour and rules for particular sports.

Working Groups and Forums

These can help reduce conflicts and agree management schemes. The Purbeck Climbing Forum is one such group, providing a means of agreeing and monitoring management. Harbour users' groups can also be effective.

Permits & Charging

Can be introduced where an organisation has powers to do so, and can be effective. Harbour authorities have the power to introduce permits and charging within their boundaries. Poole Harbour Commissioners use this mechanism effectively for water-skiing.

Charging is justified where recreational activities benefit from management, and provided that means to collect charges from all users who benefit are in place. Some uses are price-sensitive however, and care must

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be taken when deciding on a suitable charging structure. The introduction of charges can have the effect of displacing activity.

Donation

Zoning of recreation can be effective for activities where conflicts can be reduced by limiting either the areas or times when activities take place. Although most often considered as a management tool for water sports, zones can also be applied to terrestrial activities. Where schemes are in place they need to be well publicised, and there needs to be coordination to ensure activities are fairly provided for in zones that suit them. As with charging, care is needed to ensure zoning does not merely displace problems elsewhere on the coast. Zoning has been used successfully at several sites in Dorset, including Bournemouth seafront and Poole Harbour, while **seasonal restrictions** have proved effective in managing cliff climbing in Purbeck.

Information Provision

Good quality **site-based information** needs to be provided to raise awareness of local regulations and sensitivities. Information needs to be well presented, clearly written and effectively distributed. Public launch points are one important place to focus site based information boards. Care is needed to

ensure a high standard of design, and avoid a proliferation of signs – which is both ineffective and unsightly. Ideally some level of co-ordination needs to be achieved between the different authorities to ensure a consistent standard of information. The Coastguard and Sports Council have published a national good practice guide to provide advice on design and siting.

Published information and codes of practice are also useful in promoting good safety and environmental conduct, and there are a number of useful national publications. More focussed information on local management issues also needs to be provided. The main issue with publications is ensuring that they are effectively distributed, and there can be problems in delivering stand-alone leaflets to users who are not members of clubs. More use of the internet, the media and specialist magazines is needed.

The Role of Legislation

A positive approach to managing recreation through the positive provision of facilities, voluntary cooperation and ‘education rather than legislation’ is the accepted ideal. In many cases it proves a successful approach, but in reality a measure of legal backing is also important to the success of many management schemes. Powers are needed to ensure that measures can be backed up by enforcement, particularly where a minority of individuals may ignore other measures.

The main legal mechanisms for regulating recreation are the byelaw making powers of harbours, local authorities and the National Trust. Dorset will need to take account of the results of this when they are published. Where bye-laws are introduced they need to be effectively ‘policed’, and the ability of authorities to back up bye-law creation with enforcement must be considered before any new measures are introduced. Harbour authorities remain a source of good practice in regulating recreational activity, and the updated Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan 2006 is one of the leading examples of a co-ordinated approach to coastal recreation management. This plan co-ordinates management of the harbour and serves as a Management Scheme for the European Marine Site. It covers present and future needs for nature conservation and recreation.

Beyond byelaws there are a range of views about the benefits of adopting national legislation to increase the level of control over watercraft use. Concerns are expressed by many about the safety of powered watercraft in the hands of poorly or untrained users. The lack of legal requirement for minimum standards of training, age limits or third party insurance for those using watercraft is an issue, particularly in relation to the use of fast-motorised craft. Many harbour authorities consider that a national registration scheme for watercraft would assist them in enforcing regulations. The British Water Ski and Wakeboard Federation supports legal

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standards for those operating powerboats and other fast motor craft. In the absence of national measures, there has been a move to introduce localised registration and restrictions, and an example is a permit scheme for jet-skis in Poole Harbour introduced in 1998, which requires those using craft to:

- be registered with the harbour authority and display a registration number;
- carry adequate third party insurance;
- sign to indicate they understand the main harbour by-laws.

Taking the Lead with Management

A high standard of recreation management must be one of the principal concerns of any coastal zone management programme for Dorset. Detailed decisions need to be taken locally, and the lead role in implementing recreation management needs to be clear. The only clear statutory lead roles are those of harbour authorities within harbours, and rights of way authorities (County and Unitary Councils) on land. Elsewhere landowners may manage activity on the beaches and the shoreline, which they own, with the possibility of the use of byelaws through District local authorities in some cases. What is not clear is who is in a position to lead with activity offshore, beyond the established harbours and bathing beaches. It is likely that the local authorities will be best placed to take an overall co-ordinating role, in partnership with

landowners. The powers to do so may be clarified by the DETR byelaw review, but the resources to act remain open to question.

Recreation management is one of the main areas where the ideal is a more active approach to management on the whole of the open coast. There is a need for co-ordination of policy, and a detailed plan of action. This is one of the areas where detailed coastal zone management plans could be of particular value in the future.

Scope for Growth

One of the key needs is to identify the scope for the Dorset Coast to accommodate an increase in active sport and recreation. The current focus of activity is within the urban areas of the coast, and in the future a continued focus on these areas is likely to be a sensible approach. They are places where the resource is attractive, where infrastructure is in place, and where local management is most likely to be achievable. Portland Harbour represents a particular set of opportunities for recreation, following the withdrawal of the Navy. Portland Port Ltd has the lead role in realising this potential, in balance with the other interests in the harbour.

Outside of the developed coast and resort areas the scope for growth is more limited by the lack of infrastructure and exposed conditions. It is important to retain the character of the remote, quieter areas, which

makes them suitable for informal and more adventurous land and water recreation.

Integrating Recreational Activity within Dorset's Coastal Zone

Sport and recreation need to be integrated with the other interests on the Dorset coast. The main potential interactions are as follows:

• Archaeology

Marine archaeological sites are frequently discovered by sports divers, though some can damage sites through the collection of souvenirs and intensity of number of divers on a wreck. More might be done to involve sports divers in marine archaeological work, through training or to give areas archaeological status thus not allowing divers near the site. On land there is potential for erosion through visitors walking across coastal sites.

• Coastal Defence

Coastal defence works are a potential source of recreational amenities and access, and may also be a mechanism for protecting the coast path. Beach replenishment used as a form of coastal defence in areas such as Bournemouth provides recreational and amenity beaches.

• Educational Use

There are a variety of recreational clubs and schools in the area which offer tuition in both terrestrial and water sports. Codes of conduct produced by recreational councils and bodies

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inform users of techniques and information, which will result in safe and hopefully conflict-free recreation. Warning and information signs can be placed at slipways and other access points to the water as well as in car parks and popular land-based recreational sites.

- **Fishing**

Recreational angling and collecting of fish by divers impact on the same resource as that used for commercial fishermen. There are some limited conflicts, particularly where recreational 'catch' is sold illegally. Some part-time commercial fishing boats supplement their income from recreational users.

- **Geology and Geomorphology**

The fixing of bolts for climbing and the removal of loose rock can cause physical damage to rock faces. Recreational collecting impacts on the fossil resource, although is not likely to be a cause of damage to more valuable specimens, but there are associated safety issues.

- **Landscape & Seascape**

Recreational activity allows people to enjoy the quality of the coastal landscape. It can create localised impacts on landscape through erosion, and is also a source of development pressures. Watercrafts add visual interest to the coast, provided that they do not also create intrusive noise.

- **Marine Aggregates**

No major interactions, although marine aggregates are a key source for beach replenishment schemes, which have recreational benefits. Dredging for aggregate can cause visibility to be disturbed which could potentially lead to a decline in diver numbers if diving in Dorset becomes associated with poor visibility.

- **Maritime Industries**

Water recreation forms the core of business for many of the maritime industries in Dorset.

- **Military Activity**

Military activity is a limitation on recreational activity in the Lulworth Ranges, especially around Kimmeridge Bay and the Purbeck area throughout much of the year, although throughout the summer months ranges are generally open due to summer leave of military personnel. Elsewhere military and recreational watercraft share water space.

- **Pollution & Environmental Quality**

Recreation is a potential source of noise, litter and localised sewage pollution, and this is discussed above. Recreational users demand a high standard of water quality, and the improvement of sewage treatment has general recreational benefits.

- **Ports & Shipping**

Poole and Portland Harbours are two of the most important areas for recreation on the Dorset coast, and the harbour authorities

work to ensure that recreational and commercial traffic do not conflict. It is important for a diverse range of activities to co-exist safely both off-shore and on-shore. This can be done through obeying harbour speed limits, traffic signals and safety instructions.

- **Tourism**

Recreation is often difficult to separate from tourism. Most visitors will take part in recreational activities during their stay.

- **Wildlife**

Recreation is a potential source of localised damage and disturbance, which is a particular concern at sensitive sites. Recreational development can also impact on coastal wildlife, though it is generally tightly controlled.

Policy Directions for Recreation on the Dorset Coast

The following policy questions about the future of coastal recreation in Dorset are posed for discussion:

1. How should growth in recreational activity be catered for?

- Is a focus of future sport and active recreation within urban and resort areas desirable?
- Where are the main sites where further activity could be promoted - and properly managed?

Access and Recreation

- Are the recreational facilities on the Dorset coast sufficient to meet future needs? Where are new facilities needed?
- How can effective information on future trends be secured from sports organisations and the industry?

2. Are new management arrangements needed for offshore recreation on the open coast?

- What is the extent of actual recreational conflicts on the open coast?
- What are the management priorities?
- How can co-ordination between the different managing authorities be achieved?
- Is zoning of water sports on the open coast worth considering?
- How can the tranquillity of the remote stretches of coastline be maintained in the long term?
- Is a more active role by local authorities in managing open coast activities a realistic prospect?
- How could more be done to promote higher standards of recreational safety in Dorset?

3. Would increased legislative powers benefit coastal recreation management in Dorset?

- How will Dorset's local authorities respond, if they receive new coastal recreation bye-law powers?
- Is there a Dorset view on the value of a licensing scheme for recreational craft?
- What are the likely impacts of environmental legislation?

4. What are the priorities for promoting sport and active recreation on the coast?

- Is a more active approach to promoting watersports to Dorset's young people needed?
- How can voluntary organisations, which support coastal recreation, be supported?
- Do the facilities for recreation training and coaching in Dorset need to be improved?
- How can better links between those promoting coastal recreation, and those managing it be made?

5. What are the education and information priorities for coastal recreation users?

- Should on-site signs and information be better co-ordinated, and produced to a consistent standard?
- What are the priority needs for environmental awareness, and how are they best delivered?
- How can the impact of existing educational campaigns be sustained?

- Is effective distribution of existing publications and codes of practice being achieved?