

The Dartmouth Area's Green Matrix

The green matrix that can be mapped within the Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan area is shown in the map attached to this report. It is made up of core areas and both structural and functional connections.

Core areas:

1. All the coastal land from Coombe Point to Gallants Bower: mixed habitat of cliffs topped with lowland dry acid grassland (UK BAP priority habitat) and scrub, bordering mixed farmland.
Designations: South Devon Heritage Coast (SDHC) and County Wildlife Site (CWS).
Management: the coastal land from Gallants Bower to Little Dartmouth is managed by the National Trust working with the tenant farmer, so that livestock grazing is carried out at appropriate times of year and at suitable levels of density to allow the flowering of coastal grassland species. Scrub and bracken are managed to create a mosaic of habitats suitable for the Cirl Bunting (seen regularly along the South West Coastal Path between Coombe Point and Blackstone Point) as part of the RSPB Project with local landowners covering farmland south of the town under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. In the long term, the Trust will look to increase the amount of permanent pasture inland from the coastal strip to create a wider area of unimproved habitat. (*National Trust Area Ranger – personal communication*)
2. Gallants Bower with Compass Wood: mixed deciduous woodland with an area of semi-improved open grassland and scrub containing a scheduled monument.
Designations: South Devon Heritage Coast (SDHC) and County Wildlife Site (CWS). The trees on Gallant's Bower are under a blanket Tree Preservation Order.
Management: owned and managed by the National Trust so that there are trees of diverse ages, species, and structure; selected trees will be allowed to reach maturity / veteran status; invasive species such as cherry laurel are removed and hazel is coppiced on rotation; where possible, deadwood habitat is encouraged. Trees are monitored for visitor safety, alongside all access paths and boundaries in line with the NT Tree Safety Management Framework.
3. The Castle Estate: mixed deciduous woodland and scrub.
Designation: South Devon Heritage Coast (SDHC) and County Wildlife Site (CWS).
Management: owned and managed by Dartmouth Town Council. A management plan for this area is being developed. A part known as Sugary Cove is designated as a Village Green. The area immediately around Dartmouth Castle is owned and managed by English Heritage.
4. Norton Woods & Meadow: mixed deciduous woodland, partly replanted with conifers, that includes West Norton Wood and Ashplat Copse; also the marshy grassland along the stream that issues into Mill Creek, with the tidal mudflats at the head of the creek.
Designation: Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)* and County Wildlife Site (CWS)
Management: these woods are in private ownership and the management plans are not

known. The AONB Estuaries Officer monitors the mudflats with the river authorities, which have a low-intervention management approach.

5. Lower Norton Wood: mixed deciduous woodland, partly replanted with conifers.
Designation: Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) and County Wildlife Site (CWS)
Management: these woods are in private ownership and the management plans are not known.
6. Sandquay Woods and Townstal Wood: mixed deciduous woodland with small stands of conifer along Mill Creek.
Designation: Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) and County Wildlife Site (CWS)
Management: these woods are in private ownership and the management plans are not known.
7. Norton Wood and Townstal Hill Wood: mixed deciduous woodland partly replanted with conifers.
Designation: none
Management: these woods are in private ownership and the management plans are not known.
8. Longcross Cemetery: a mosaic of habitats including mown and unmown areas of semi-improved grassland and some old trees
Designation: none
Management: owned and managed by Dartmouth Town Council and maintained as a burial ground. A management plan for this area is being developed.
9. Dartmouth Community Orchard: two paddocks of traditional orchard separated by a small area of old, mixed deciduous woodland.
Designation: traditional orchards are a UK BAP priority habitat
Management: owned and managed by Dartmouth Town Council with the assistance of the Friends of Dartmouth Community Orchard. The management plan has three aims: to conserve and renew the stock of traditional apple trees, maintain the area for use by the community for quiet recreation, and manage it sympathetically for wild life to enhance its biodiversity.
10. St Clement's Churchyard: semi-improved grassland with old trees.
Designation: none
Management: maintained as a burial ground by the church authorities.
11. Crosby Meadows: a small area of mixed, deciduous woodland adjacent to housing
Designation: none
Management: light woodland management preserving public access.
12. Beacon Jubilee Park: a level area of scrub and semi-improved grassland bordered by a young, mixed planting of native trees.
Designation: none
Management: by South Hams District Council - annual mowing of the grassland, with the walk ways mown more frequently for public access; some scrub management.

13. Dyers Wood: mixed deciduous woodland.

Designation: Site of Wildlife Interest (Formerly Local Wildlife Site) owned and managed by the National Trust. The trees are under a blanket Tree Preservation Order.

Management: as for the management of Gallants Bower (see 2 above).

* PAWS are woodland sites which contain evidence of former ancient woodland, or for which there is recorded evidence of former ancient woodland, and which have subsequently been planted with coniferous and / or broadleaved trees. They form part of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI).

These core areas are rich in biodiversity, and require sympathetic, on-going management. However, the connections between them, both structural and functional, are equally important from a biodiversity point of view and also require appropriate management. *Structural connections* enable species to move or spread along linear corridors such as walls, hedgerows, tree lines, streams, and coast lines – all to be found in the Dartmouth area. These linear corridors may be subject to pressures. Where hedgerows border roads, there is inevitable pollution from traffic fumes, litter, and unsympathetic cutting regimes. Where streams border agricultural land, there is pollution from chemical run-off and erosion of banks by livestock. Coastlines are subject to erosion as well as littering from marine sources.

Functional connections provide open areas that enable species to move through or spread across them, such as roads, parks, open fields, and urban gardens. Birds and other flying fauna may pass over them easily, perhaps stopping to rest or forage; terrestrial species may also pass over them, though walls – a common feature in the urban areas – may hinder the movement of species like hedgehog, and roads provide traffic hazards. The pressures on these areas come from light pollution in urban areas, the use of chemical insecticides and herbicides, and the introduction of alien species.

It should be emphasised that the Dartmouth green matrix described above is part of a wider green matrix that connects Dartmoor, the River Dart, the coast line of South Devon, and the English Channel. It not only supports resident species but is also of vital importance to migratory species moving east-west and north-south to and from mainland Europe and points beyond.

The marine area that borders the area of the Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan and covers Torbay and Start Bay is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Parts are also a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) designated in 2013.