



Summary

Dorset National Landscape have secured funding in principle for a project across the Brit catchment that aims to reduce flood risk in Beaminster, Netherbury, and Bridport. The purpose of the project is to look at the effectiveness of Natural Flood Management, while also looking to see if we can reduce the management burden on Bridport's flood defences and enhance nature.

Background

There has been a reasonable focus on managing flooding in the wider Brit catchment in recent years:

- The Environment Agency operate a flood defence scheme in Bridport. These defences allow river water to be managed in times of high flow. From time to time, they require built-up sediment to be removed, which is an expensive operation. In addition to flood risk from rivers, properties in Beaminster, Netherbury, and Bridport are also at risk from surface water runoff, where saturated ground can no longer soak up rainwater, which in turn leads to significant overland flow and flooding.
- Over the past two years, Dorset National Landscape has been working with the Environment Agency, an independent geomorphologist, and Dorset Wildlife Trust, to identify high-risk fields where runoff could cause problems. We have also been working with landowners to identify opportunities to work with nature to overcome these issues. The aim is to reduce local flooding issues and stop sediment entering the rivers and ending up behind the flood defences in Bridport.
- Dorset Council's Flood Risk Management Team along with Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and Environment Agency are also interested in the risk posed by flooding and have been working on rural runoff projects over the past three years, which aims to tackle flooding in high-risk communities.

The Natural Flood Management programme is a Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs project, administered through the Environment Agency. Its aim is to reduce flood risk in high-risk communities, while learning about the effectiveness of Natural Flood Management techniques. The funding from the Natural Flood Management Programme could allow us to bring these elements together and allow more efficient delivery.

Natural Flood Management Programme

A partnership of Dorset National Landscape, West Dorset Wilding, and Dorset Wildlife Trust submitted a bid in November 2023 to the Environment Agency for funding through the Natural Flood Management Programme. In February 2024, we found out that this bid had been successful, and we will now work towards developing a fully costed programme of works for submission in September 2024. Delivery will take place between October 2024 and March 2027.

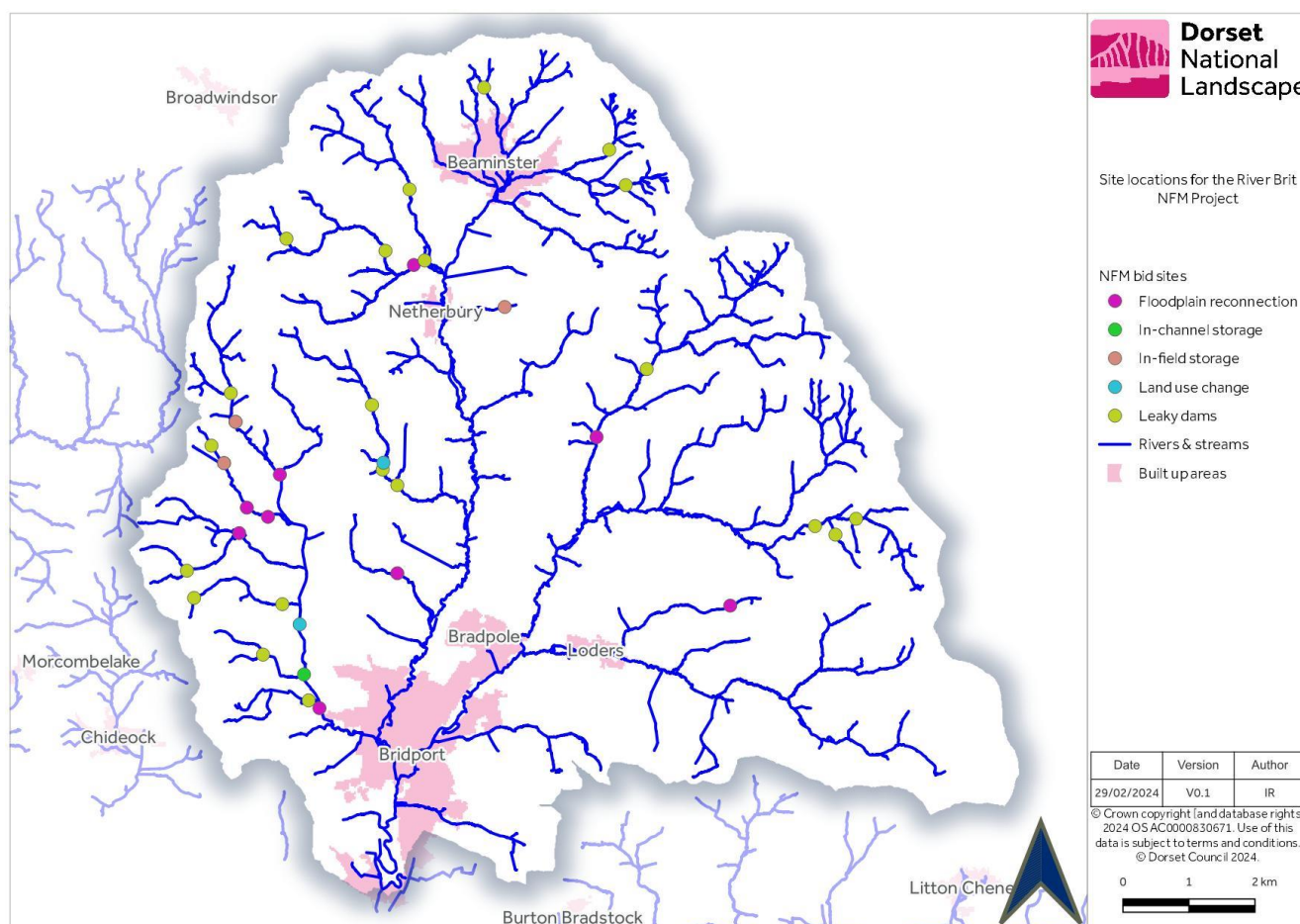
Investment in the wider Brit catchment, which includes the Rivers Brit, Simene, Mangerton and Asker, will support flood risk reduction in Beaminster, Netherbury, and Bridport. It will help reduce the management burden on the flood defences in Bridport. It will also make the landscape more resilient to future climate change. Investment aligns with the Brit Landscape Recovery scheme that has recently been awarded funding to develop a landscape vision for the next 25 years.

Our bid included several methods of Natural Flood Management that will be installed at strategic locations throughout the catchment. A significant element of the project is to monitor the effectiveness of these interventions, so that Natural Flood Management can play an increasing role in managing flood risk into the future.

The River Brit proposal includes a number of potential solutions that range from the simple to the more complicated:

1. Four hectares of land use change that will support storage of excess rainfall in the field. This includes reversion of arable and intensively managed grassland to semi-natural grassland and wetlands.
2. One hectare of in-field flood storage, through the creation of small bunds that will hold back water on high-risk overland flow routes.
3. 12km of leaky dams to slow the flow of water through the catchment, trapping sediment along the way.
4. Five hectares of floodplain reconnection, lowering riverbanks to allow more water onto the floodplain, and stored in wetland areas, scrapes, and ponds. This increases storage capacity of flood waters in time of need.

The total value of delivering these solutions is £280,000. Furthermore, £215,000 has been allocated to detailed monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures. Staff time to design, secure permissions, and oversee delivery, as well as enable wider community engagement, come to a further £117,000. With a 10% contingency, the overall budget of the project is £673,000.



What next...

We now have to develop the details of the project and present a business case. We have until September 2024 to do this. This will involve more detailed planning with landowners, securing the required permissions and installing monitoring equipment. In September, our case will be reviewed, and we hope to be given the green light to begin delivery in earnest.

We will work closely with the Brit Catchment Recovery Project, so that the benefits being delivered by farmers and landowners are properly accounted for, and that support is given to ensure that these measures are maintained into the future. If all goes to plan, more of these measures will be installed through the Brit Landscape Recovery Scheme, building up the benefits to people living in Beaminster, Bridport, and Netherbury as well as making the landscape more resilient.

Contact details and further information

Should you have any questions, please contact Ian Rees via ian.rees@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk. More information is available on our website: www.dorset-nl.org.uk/project/rivers.