



**SOUTH WEST**

**CHARMOUTH**

**A COASTAL VILLAGE IN DORSET**

**We are pleased to be taking part in  
The South West in Bloom 2022  
Competition and hope that we can take  
part for many years to come.**

**Charmouth** is a coastal village in rural West Dorset. The village lies on the Dorset / Devon border and is part of the 95 miles of Jurassic Coast. It is designated a World Heritage Site. The spectacular landscape of beaches, cliffs and landslides offer a complete record through 185 million years of the Earth's history.

Charmouth is famous for its fossils, indeed people started collecting fossils in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mary Anning being one of the most notable.



Steep coastal hills rise to either side of the village. To the east is Stonebarrow and Golden Cap, the highest point on the South Coast. To the west is Black Ven, one of the largest mudslides in Europe and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, or SSSI. The National Trust owns and manages much of the land surrounding the village. There is a great network of footpaths both inland and on the coast. The river Char runs through the village to the sea from Pilsdon and the Marshwood Vale. Charmouth is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

There is a great sense of community and pride amongst the villagers, which is well shown by the huge number of community groups, activities and events that take place.... all run by volunteers.

We are very fortunate to live in such an amazing place.

## A bit of History ....

As far back as the Iron age there was a settlement here. And one can still see evidence of Hill Forts at Lamberts and Coneys Castle.

Vikings successfully invaded the area in 833. A newly installed gate at the village boundary on the coast path beautifully depicts the invasion in locally sourced wood and handcrafted metalwork.



Later in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the village was set out with walls and boundaries, parts of which can still be seen.

The village has 34 listed buildings and a population of 1352 (2011 census). The population increasing by almost three times in the summer months.



# South West in Bloom Judges Tour Itinerary

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022

- 2pm Meet Charmouth Parish Councillors Jane Bremner, Julie Leah and Andrew Lightfoot at the Foreshore car park
- 2.05 Visit the Charmouth Coast Heritage Centre, meet Jan Cole
- 2.20 Walk to Higher Sea Lane, Double Common, Lower Sea Lane to The Street, passing a Local Green Space, Charmouth Primary School, St.Andrews Community Hall and Charmouth Tennis Club
- 2.40 Meet Charmouth Traders (to be specified)
- 2.45 Walk to playing field to see Queen's Green Canopy
- 3pm Return to The Street
- 3.05 Reach The Elms and meet ? of Charmouth History Society in The Pavey Room
- 3.15 Visit Charmouth Community Library and meet Linda Sayers and Eden Thomson
- 3.30 Walk through the Anchor Housing site, village car park and return to the foreshore along Lower Sea Lane, passing the reed bed and estuary of the River Char
- 3.45 Conclude tour with discussion of future proposals with the Charmouth Councillors

Starting at the Foreshore we can see the undeveloped cliffs and beach, which are part of the World Heritage Site under UNESCO's criteria VIII, that is Earth's History and Geology. The area is protected by its SSSI status.

The Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, established as a charity in 2004, promotes responsible fossil collecting and provides education to all that are interested. With only 6 members of staff there is a high level of dependence on volunteers.



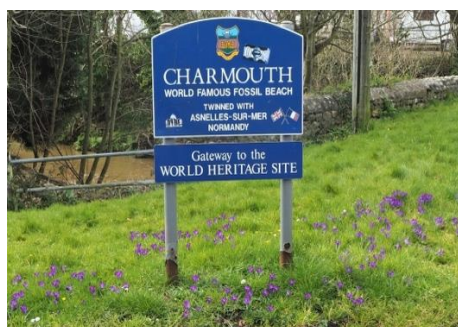
Maintenance of the grass areas, known as Evans Cliff and West Green, is a balance between the ability for locals and holidaymakers to enjoy the space and the desire to protect the many anthills and to leave bramble areas and hedgerows for wildlife. New hedging has been planted along West Green.



Leaving the Foreshore we follow the path through one of the Local Green Spaces as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, and turn down through Double Common.



In the autumn of 2021, The Rotary Club donated 4000 crocuses to Charmouth as part of their Purple4Polio Campaign. The purple crocus symbolises the near eradication of Polio worldwide. Many villagers volunteered to plant them, and we all enjoyed seeing them appear earlier this year. Planting sites included the village entrances, the playing field, the cemetery, Double Common and dotted around the village.



Walking down the path by Charmouth Primary School we join Lower Sea Lane and turn towards the Village Centre. We pass several Community facilities – St Andrews Hall with it's badminton Court, Charmouth Tennis Club and just off Lower Sea Lane on Wesley Close the Village Hall and the Youth Centre hall.



By the notice board we now have four renovated planters with deeper soil than previously and the addition of some drought tolerant perennials. Thus, reducing the need for daily watering.

Lower Sea Lane meets the High Street with its collection of shops, cafes and two pubs.

Many of the shops and houses on the street have good floral displays on their frontages.



Crossing the High Street we follow Barrs Lane towards the Playing Field.

As part of the “Queen’s Green Canopy”, the Parish Council’s environment group together with villagers, members of Charmouth Gardeners and children from the school planted 150 whips provided by the Woodland Trust. Species include hawthorn, dogwood, wild cherry, silver birch, rowan and hazel. The newly planted trees are doing well. The Charmouth Scouts are helping to water them during dry periods.



Regular mowing of the extensive playing fields generates large quantities of grass clippings. Recently, a basic composting facility was created to try to recycle this material rather than simply dumping it amongst the surrounding woods. Other types of ‘brown’ material will be sourced to create a better-balanced mixture which can be used for mulching and to complement fresh compost supplies.

Trials of ‘No Mow May’ have caused some difficulties in mowing the long grass and gathering it up using the Parish Council’s current equipment. Consequently, variations of differential mowing will be tested, including cutting paths and patterns on several sites which would create greater floral diversity while also providing fun spaces for children to explore. Time taken to clear these sites in the autumn should be compensated by the reduced mowing time needed during the summer.



At The Elms Parish Council Offices, there is a small garden gracing the entrance to the building. Formerly maintained by the Charmouth & District Twinning Association, the garden is undergoing some refurbishment. Two roses are being planted to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

A local history society known as the Pavey Group are based at The Elms.

Returning to the High Street we turn uphill to Charmouth Community Library is run by Friends of Charmouth Library, a volunteer-run self-financing Charity. In addition to running the library they host the Post Office on a Thursday. In their grounds they have created a beautiful garden that attracts the butterfly and its insect friends whenever possible. It is an enjoyable place to sit, read or just to contemplate. Inside, the Clematis Room is a community space, where activities take place to combat social isolation and encourage inter-generational communication.

Since 2008, Shoreline has been Charmouth's free village magazine. It is published three times a year and includes a village diary and many articles written by locals, often on the subject of biodiversity and our environment.



And a little further up the High Street is the War Memorial.

The Parish Council staff and the Dog Poo wardens are fastidious about litter picking, so very little is seen.

Kerbs and communal areas are regular cleared of debris to reduce the growth of weeds. When weeds do appear, they are removed manually without the use of herbicides.

As we return to the coast we walk through the Anchor Housing Scheme, that provides homes for people later in life.

Back at the Foreshore we can see The Char as it joins the sea. In 2019 Char Valley Parish Council set up the River Char Project to protect and improve the environment along the Char. More recently the Charmouth Green Group has become involved and are now undertaking river water testing here in Charmouth. One of main concerns is the letting go of sewer water at times of high consumption and following flooding.

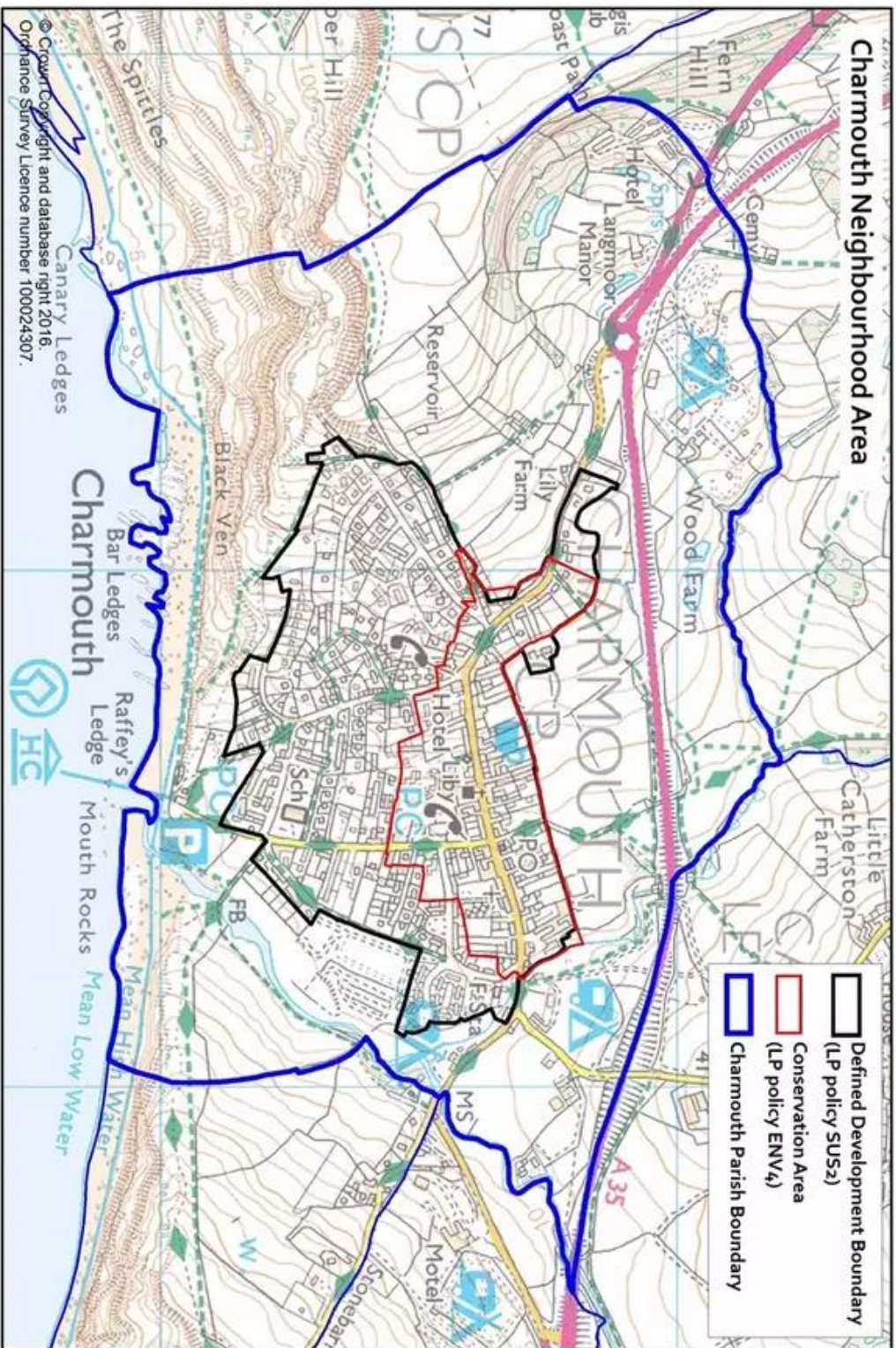


Adjacent to the car park is the reed bed. It is carefully managed by Parish Council staff to guidelines set out in the Foreshore Assent document and approved by Natural England. The protection of migrating and nesting birds, slow worms, adders and lizards, the need to increase the insect population and the importance of the margins are key to maintaining the biodiversity here.



A new hedge was planted in the spring with the aim of further protecting the area. Each year a quarter of the reed bed is cut back and there is a 10-year knotweed eradication programme which is currently halfway through. Himalayan Balsam is also present, and this must be pulled each summer before it goes to seed.

And finally, although not on our tour, the verges of the A35, that bypass our village, have seen a huge upsurge in biodiversity over the last couple of years. This is because of changes to the Highways verge maintenance programme. We hope that road users enjoy the colourful display.



## **Future projects**

**Tree Trail** to identify the many species in the village and to encourage visitors and locals alike to follow the trail around the village

**Community Garden** to create a space to grow vegetables, fruit and flowers. Somewhere for people to meet up, be together, feel relaxed and be active in the outdoors.

**Update Information Plaques** around the village to enhance knowledge

**Open Gardens Day / Weekend** to encourage gardeners to open up their gardens to others. A great way to share ideas!

To introduce **Water butts, Bird & Bat boxes** to our village.

## **Appendix**

**Charmouth Parish Council & Neighbourhood Plan**

[www.charmouthparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.charmouthparishcouncil.gov.uk)

**The Pavey Group**

[www.charmouthlocalhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.charmouthlocalhistorysociety.org.uk)

**Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, Charmouth Traders, Shoreline Magazine and Charmouth Library**

[www.charmouth.org](http://www.charmouth.org)