



## **CHARMOUTH**

### **A COASTAL VILLAGE IN DORSET**

**We are pleased to be taking part in  
The South West in Bloom Competition**

**Charmouth** is a coastal village in rural West Dorset. The village lies near 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 some 40 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 Lambert's and Coney's Castle.

Vikings successfully invaded the area in 833. A recently 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 a little over 1300 (*2021 census*). The population increases, however, by almost three times in the summer months.



## South West in Bloom Judges Tour Itinerary 6 July 2023

- 1pm Meet Environment Group members Jane Bremner, Julie Leah, Andrew Lightfoot, Katy Tunstall and Ivor Clist at The Elms, The Street, Charmouth.  
(Light lunch served)
- 1.30pm Meet Helen from The Pavey History Group and Barry from Gardening Club
- 1.45pm Visit the Charmouth Community Library & Garden
- 2pm Visit Anchor Housing Association
- 2.15pm Walk down the High St, meeting David from Morgans before turning left along Barrs Lane to the Playing Fields
- 3pm Return to the High St and walk along Lower Sea Lane, passing Charmouth Tennis Club, St Andrew's Community Hall and visiting Charmouth Primary School.
- 3.30pm Arrive at the Foreshore and visit the Heritage Coast Centre before  
I looking at the Reed Bed and the River Char.
- Return to the Elms.

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 have been planted to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Parish Council has recently published its **Resilience Plan** detailing the response to any emergencies – flood, storm damage, power outages etc and supporting our community in a crisis.

A local history society known as the **Pavey Group** are based at The Elms. The group have produced interesting articles, pamphlets and displays.

**The Garden Club** is one of the biggest membership groups in the village and they organise trips, the Annual Village Show and support each other in gardening endeavours.

Since 2008, **Shoreline Magazine** 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 about biodiversity and our environment.

**Charmouth Community Library** is run by Friends of Charmouth Library and is 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 pollinator species and birds. This year a double water butt has been funded and installed by the Lower Char Community Project using a Wessex Water grant – such a good example of community liaison. The garden 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.



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 regularly cleared of debris to reduce the growth of weeds. When weeds do appear, they are removed manually without the use of herbicides.

Behind the Library and The Elms we walk through the **Anchor Housing Scheme**, that provides homes for people later in life. The residents have joined together to produce a colourful, tranquil space.



Returning to the High Street we walk downhill to the centre of the village and turn left onto Barr's 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 village 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, who are based at the Playing Fields, have offered to help 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' and differential mowing are being tested throughout 2023, to create greater floral diversity while also providing fun spaces for children to explore.

A small **community orchard** of 10 trees has been planted alongside the Queen's Canopy to celebrate the King's Coronation. The species have been chosen to encourage pollination and give a variety of harvest times. In time this area will be a shady place to sit and enjoy the playing fields.

The Rotary Club' **Purple 4 Polio Campaign** donated 4000 crocuses to Charmouth. 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 eleven **Local Green Spaces** as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. (please see list at end)



Returning to the village centre its collection of shops, cafes and two pubs can be seen. Many of the shops and houses on the street have good floral displays throughout the seasons.





Across onto Lower Sea Lane, we can see the notice board and **village planters**. This year small trees and drought tolerant perennials have been planted with the aim of reducing the need for daily watering. The nearby **Jubilee Garden** has been renovated by some of the village residents who have also volunteered to care for it on an ongoing basis. All the planters and the Jubilee Garden have had a liberal layer of mulch applied to retain moisture and reduce weeds



Heading to the sea we pass several Community facilities – St Andrew’s Hall, Charmouth Tennis Club and just off Lower Sea Lane on Wesley Close the Village Hall and the Youth Centre hall.

Charmouth is very pleased to promote the **Great Big Dorset Hedge** [www.dorsetcan.org/hedge](http://www.dorsetcan.org/hedge) with their aim to restore and extend hedgerows over the length and breadth of Dorset. There are newly planted hedges around the reed bed and on West Green with more hedging to follow at the Playing Fields. Hedges provide berries, nuts, flowers for pollinators and a shelter belt against wind.



This year **Charmouth Primary School** is celebrating 30 years on its current site. Last month they opened their doors to the whole village for an afternoon of celebration and to show off their new Mary Anning garden which was designed by Sandhurst Garden Design and recently exhibited at Chelsea Flower Show.

Arriving 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 regular very committed volunteers. Each year they organise regular beach cleans and participate in the **Great Dorset Beach Clean** and this year they focussed on nurdle collection.



Maintenance of the grass areas, known as Evans Cliff and West Green, is a balance between enjoying the space and protecting the many anthills and leaving bramble areas and hedgerows for wildlife, such as arriving migrating birds, slow worms, lizards, and adders known to be present.

The Lookout is now used by **National Coastwatch** which are the "Eyes and Ears Along the Coast" working as part of the search and rescue community.



At the Foreshore we can see the Char as it joins the sea. In 2019 Char Valley Parish Council set up the River Char Community Project to protect and improve the environment along the Char. More recently the **Lower Char Community Project** was formed to investigate pollution issues in the river and the sea, looking at the causes of the sewage overflows, and other local issues such as plastic nurdles contaminating the beach and urban run-off of persistent chemicals and phosphates into the river.

### **Charmouth Dragon Festival May 2023**

A celebration of our river and its wildlife. The Charmouth Dragon is a local name for the mist which rises in the valley on some early mornings and curls out to sea.

Our community-made willow and recycled cloth Dragon made its way through the village accompanied by musicians and then singers composed and sang a song to the Dragon as it reached the Char. The dragon then processed back up to St Andrews Community Hall where lots of information on the importance of community responsibility and the critical need to save our wildlife was displayed.





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 and the need to increase the insect population and the importance of the margins are key to maintaining the biodiversity here.



A hedge was planted last year 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.



## **Our South West in Bloom Plan**

### **Aims**

- To improve biodiversity in the village
- To nurture attractive plants and planting throughout the seasons
- To develop a skilled team of volunteers to develop and maintain the planting and environmental awareness

### **Areas of focus**

#### **Playing field**

Queen's Green Canopy, community orchard, grass management, bulb planting, hedging, information provision.

#### **Village centre**

Jubilee Garden, Lower Sea Lane planters, traders' premises, information plaques.

#### **Foreshore**

Reed bed, grass management, planters, information plaques.

#### **Verges on main route through the village**

Bulb planting, grass management.

### **Projects**

- Bulb planting
- Hedges
- Jubilee Garden
- Lower Sea Lane planters
- Differential mowing
- Information and interpretation
- Entrances to public buildings
- Weeding pavements and roadsides
- To introduce water butts, bird & bat boxes to our village.

## **Our Partners**

**Charmouth Community Library**

**Charmouth Gardening Club**

**Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre**

**Charmouth Primary School**

**Charmouth Scouts & The Seagull Explorers**

**Charmouth Traders**

**Shoreline Magazine**

**The Lower Char Community Project**

**The Pavey History Group**

## **Our Local Green Spaces**

**As listed in our Neighbourhood Plan based on beauty, historic significance, recreation, tranquillity and richness of wildlife.**

**National Trust field, top of Old Lyme Hill.**

**Attractive small wild field, with panoramic views of Lyme Bay.**

**The Pound: Corner of Old Lyme Road and Old Lyme Hill.**

**Small green space at the top of the hill. Historic site of village stocks with bench and view down The Street.**

**The Knapp: Corner of Higher Sea Lane and The Street.**

**Small area up the hill with a bench and view up and down The Street.**

**Higher Sea Lane:**

**Small areas of grass, shrubs and wildflowers**

**A stretch of biodiverse habitat between Higher Sea Lane and The Lookout Green**

**Wilderness which includes a stream**

**Lookout Green and scrubby area to west**

**Grassy area with benches and panoramic view of seas.**

**Playing Fields**

**A large area next to the centre of the village, used for sports, recreation and community events.**

**'Tommy's Patch' - Silent Silhouette. Lower Sea Lane.**

**(Now called The Jubilee Garden)**

**A small piece of ground made available by the Parish Council for Remembrance. A space created from donations by the community.**

**Wesley's Close Green**

**A small play area in the centre of a circle of houses, much used by the children living there.**

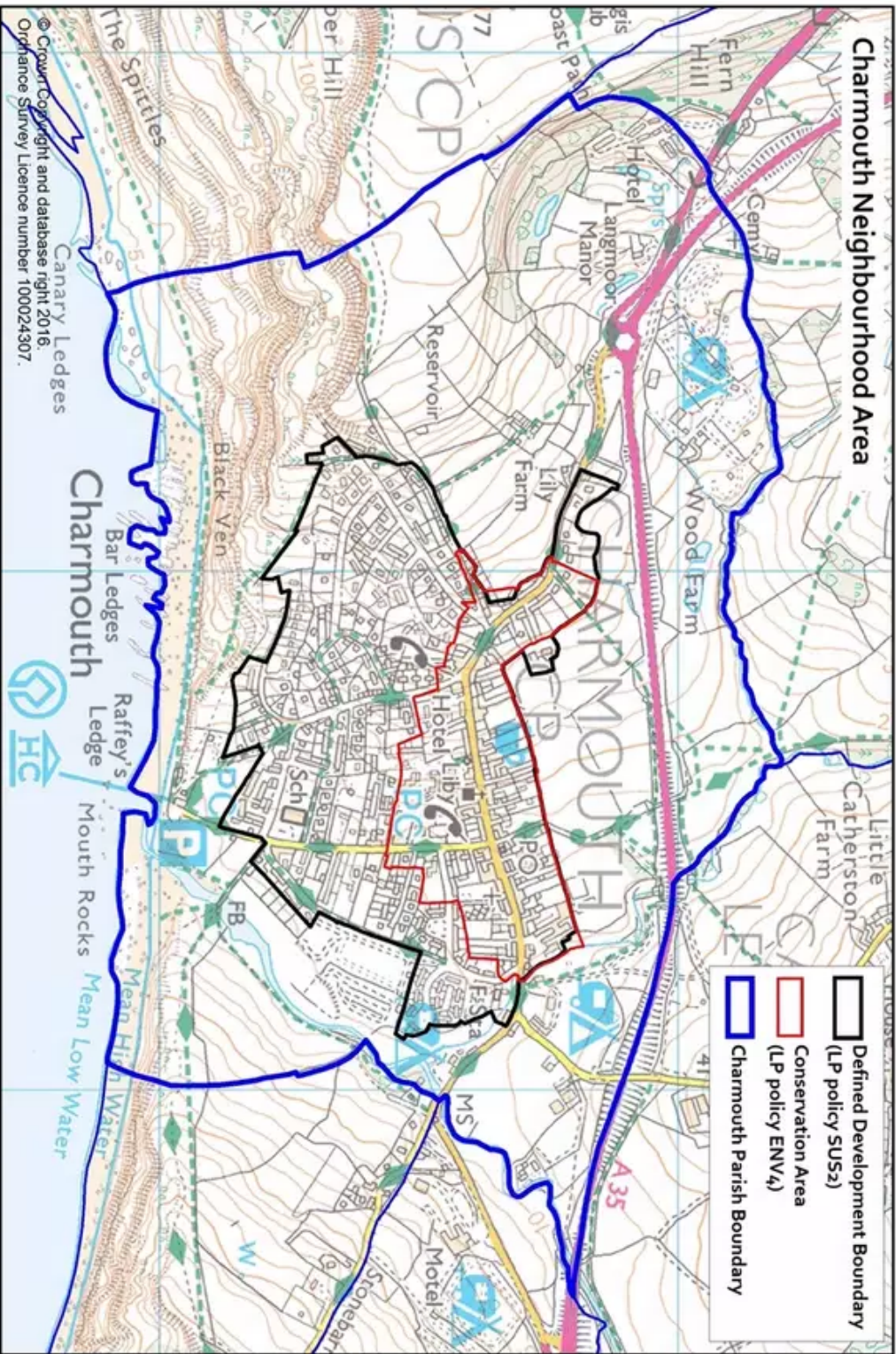
**Bridge Road Green**

**A small play area in the middle of a group of houses, much used by the children living there.**

**Evan's Cliff**

**Green area by beach, east of the river. Play area, picnic tables and benches, information display about safety for beach and fossil hunting.**





**Charmouth Neighbourhood Area**

- Defined Development Boundary (LP policy SUS2)
- Conservation Area (LP policy ENV4)
- Charmouth Parish Boundary

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