

Making Dorset beaches accessible for everyone

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The Beach Access Project
in partnership with
Dorset Coast Forum



Vision

“enhance and improve beach access and blue space to enable people with medical/mental health conditions and disabilities to play a meaningful and active role in beach life and blue space.”

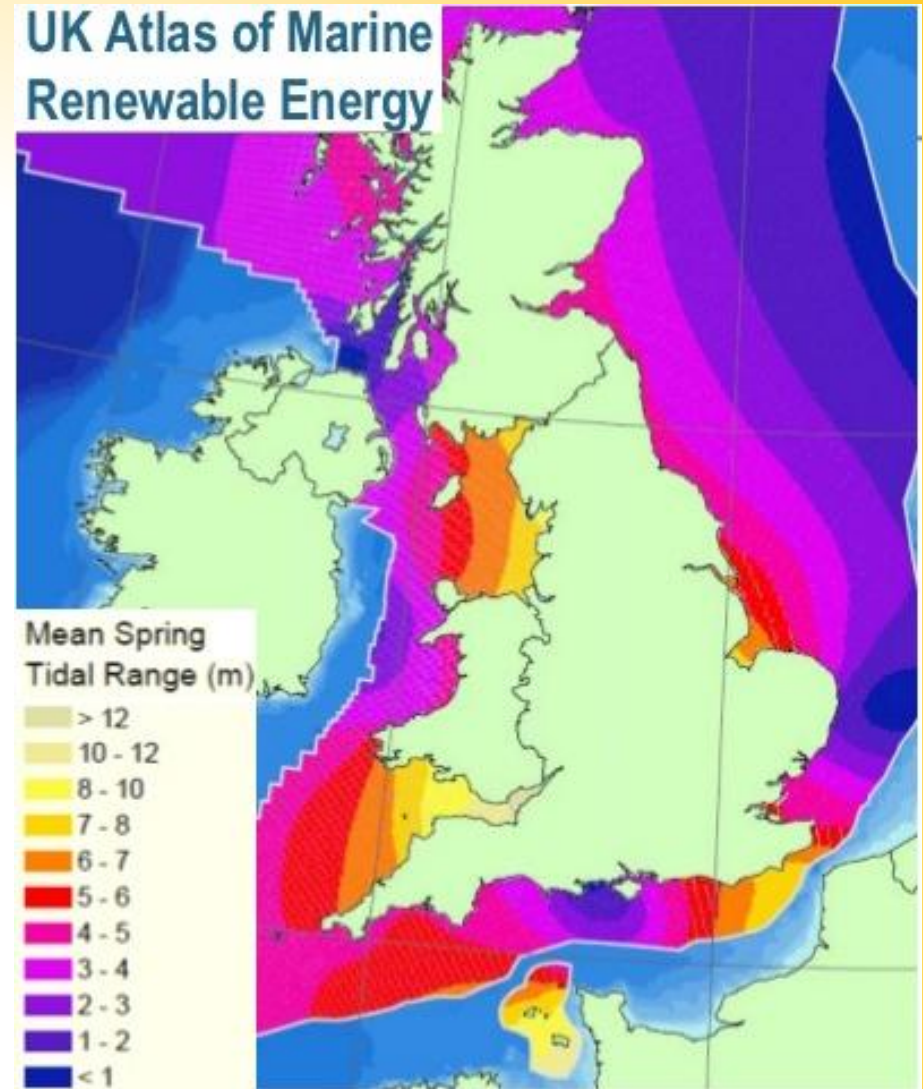


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Why Dorset?

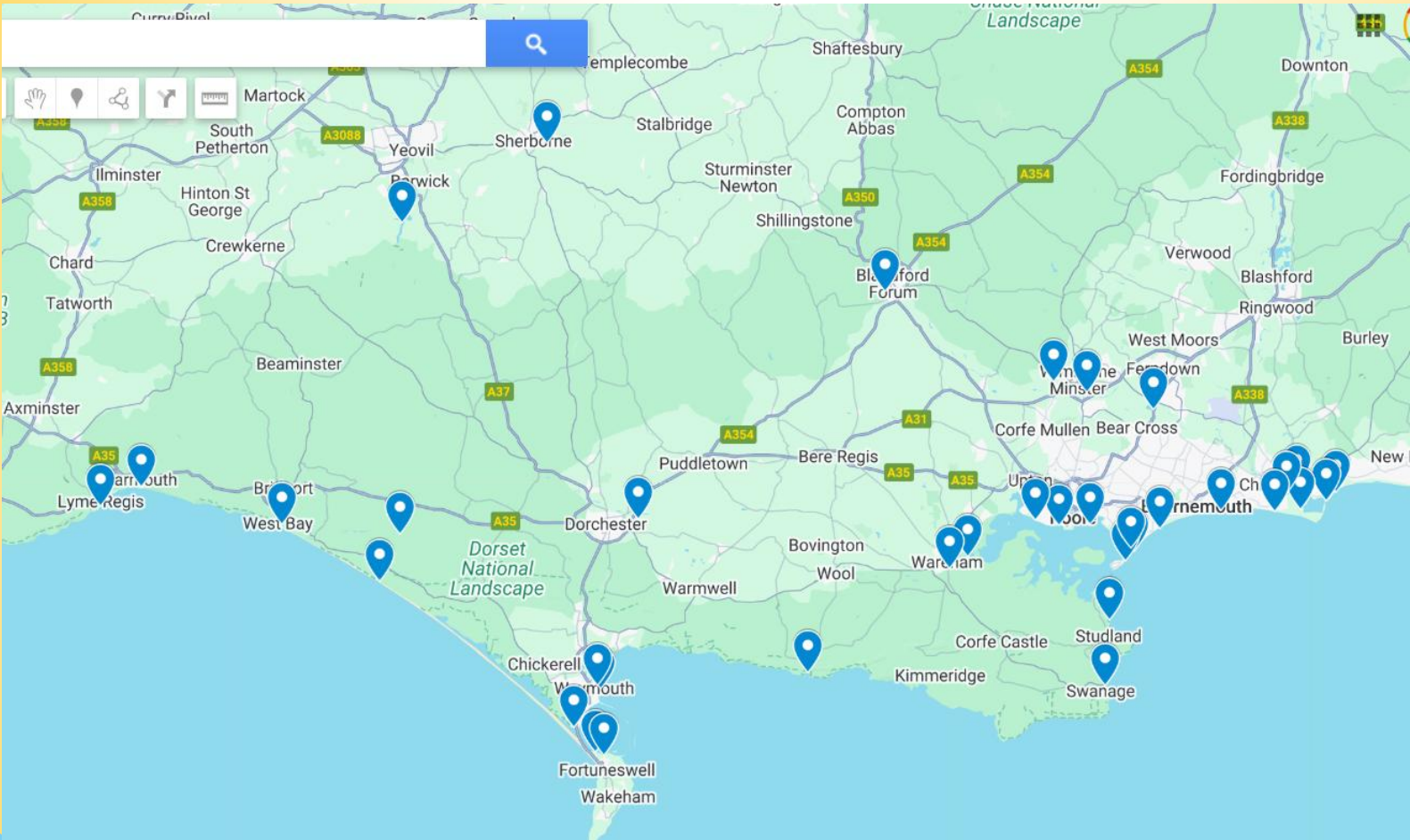
- One of the lowest tidal ranges in the UK
- An amazing community of passionate blue space advocates
- Premium tourist area with World Heritage Status
- Well managed beaches and coastal resorts
- Two enormous low tidal harbours
- Numerous well managed rivers and lakes
- Premium watersports destination



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30 Potential Dorset inclusive Blue space locations



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Current landscape

- UK Beach access standards are minimal and not enforced
- No blue space access guidance
- Beach access provision is highly variable across the UK
- No ownership of Beach Access by national and local authorities



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Rational behind the project

- **24%** people in the UK had a **disability** in the 2022/23 financial year.
- **Almost 50%** of the UK population have a **long-standing health problem**; **20%** reported being limited in activities because of a health problem
- **“There is also little provision for people with physical or sensory disabilities to access safe outdoor blue space.”** Environment Agency 2024
- Those with **longstanding health conditions or functional limitations** often have **less physical access** to good-quality Green and Blue Space.”

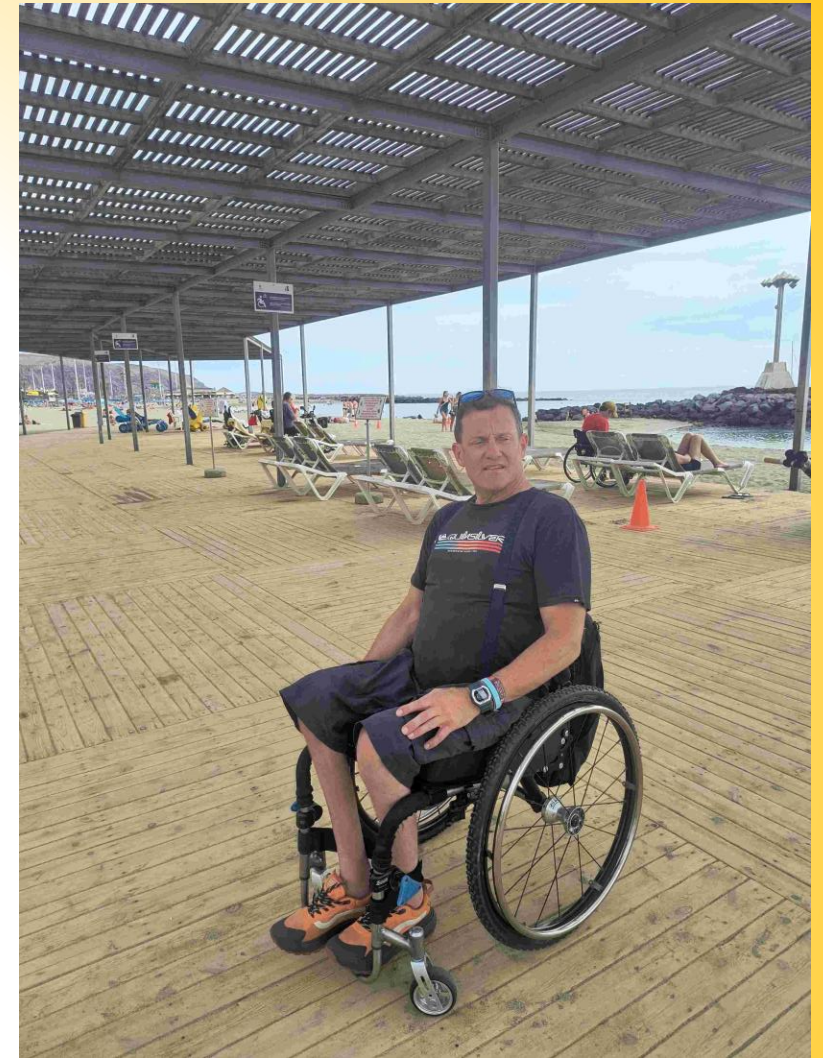


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Beach access project

- Beach access survey (June – sept 30th)
 - **1071** responses to the survey
 - Data analysis by university of Brighton
- Initial findings
 - **95%** like visiting the beach
 - **75%** said it was difficult to access the water
 - **97%** would like to visit the beach more frequently
 - **92%** said they would visit the beach / blue space if facilities were more accessible



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Beach Access Survey Results

- Current provision
 - **8%** beaches had beach matting or boardwalk
 - **8%** beaches had changing facilities with hoist
 - **16%** beaches had beach wheelchairs
 - **3%** beaches offered support from beach staff
- What would improve beach access
 - **90%** beach matting / boardwalk
 - **72%** beach wheelchairs
 - **65%** accessible toilets and parking
 - **55%** staff support
 - **38%** changing with hoist



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When you last visited the beach, tell us what made your visit enjoyable / not enjoyable.

- Its never enjoyable really as my brothers can go in the water but I sit there watching
- *I can only stay on a promenade. I'd like to get onto the beach and to the water.*
- Sand on the prom that gets into the wheels. No access onto the beach
- *Frustrated that I had to rely on husband to help get around due to manual chair struggling on sand.*



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Inclusive blue space incorporates

- For harbours, canals, rivers, lakes, etc
 - High quality Pre visit **information**
 - Accessible **public transport**
 - accessible **parking**
 - accessible **toilet changing facilities**
 - easy launch / **access onto the water**
 - all connected with **barrier free pathways**
 - signage / **multi format information**
- Beach require additional features
 - **barrier free boardwalks connecting platform areas** (solid platform / sheltered area that provides people with a space to interact, sunbathe and move freely around)
 - **beach matting** that can connect boardwalk with access to the water



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Critical human catalyst

- Blue space is inherently harder to access than green space
 - Moving
 - Dynamic
 - Interacts directly with green (yellow) space
- Provide **physical support** to enable adults and young people with medical conditions and disabilities to access blue space. **Eg lifeguards, beach staff, instructors etc**



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Beach access platform



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