



Sandbanks Dune Management Study

**Consultation on Draft Sand Dunes
Management Approach at Sandbanks**

Information Document

16 February to 29 March 2026



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1. Introduction

BCP Council are consulting on a new draft approach for managing sand dunes at Sandbanks in Poole.

This document outlines what we are proposing to effectively manage specific challenges identified with the sand dunes at Sandbanks. The proposed approach has been refined over two public engagement phases with key stakeholders including residents in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) between 2023 and 2025.

We would now like to hear your views on the proposed draft management approach before any decisions are made.

If you have any questions, please email coastal@bcpcouncil.gov.uk and you can find out how to give us your views in the 'Have your say' section at the end of this document or on the main webpage: haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/sand-dunes-consultation.

You can also find [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) at the end of this document.

The consultation will close at **23:59pm on 29 March 2026**.

2. Background

Sandbanks is host to a system of sand dunes in Poole, Dorset, which perform multiple functions including providing:

- a natural form of protection against coastal erosion;
- habitats for rare and protected species such as Sand Lizards; and
- an important role in increasing amenity value.

The sand dunes were created as part of the Sandbanks Coast Protection Scheme to protect the coastline from erosion, which included sand dune regeneration in 1996 (Phase I) and 2001 (Phase II). Following the scheme, the sand dunes have become well established and have shown signs of spreading along the coastline (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - Sand dune growth since the Sandbanks Coast Protection Scheme.

However, there are several challenges involved with dune development at Sandbanks which require consideration, including:

- **Sand Lizards / Protected Species** – The presence of these limits what, when, where and how any development works can occur.
- **Storms** – Periodically cause dune face erosion/cliffing, reducing the coast protection and habitat functions of the dunes.
- **Visitor Trampling** – Excessive/repetitive trampling of sand dune habitat can reduce/destroy vegetation height and cover.
- **Beach Accessibility** – Some access paths have become buried by sand, preventing easy access for all users.
- **Sand Encroachment** – Stormy winters can cause an accumulation of wind-blown sand on the promenade, beach huts, buildings and property walls which are not designed to take the weight of sand loading.
- **Reduction of Sea Views and Privacy** – The height and spread of dunes may block views and / or reduce privacy from land and properties behind the dunes.

Additional information on project background and the challenges faced in this area can be found online at: [Sandbanks Dune Management Study 2024-2026 - South West Flood and Coastal](#).

The aim of this study is to develop an improved approach to managing the sand dunes to consider these impacts whilst ensuring they continue to provide coastal protection and habitat for protected species.

3. An engagement-led approach

We have taken an engagement-led approach to develop an improved strategy to managing the sand dunes, which involves four stages. Below is a summary of each stage and a brief description of the outcomes to date.

Please note that more detailed information on the work that has been carried out to date can be found in the Supplementary Document here: haveyoursay.bpcouncil.gov.uk/sand-dunes-consultation.

Stage 1 – Finding Out

- We engaged with a variety of stakeholders to understand what the key issues with managing sand dunes are from a variety of perspectives.
- Between 2023 and 2024, we interviewed key stakeholders to understand the current challenges of sand dune management and determine what improvements could be made. We gathered information and insights and drew on expert knowledge and experience. Interviewees included:
 - Internal BCP Services (Environment, Seafront Operations, Estates, Events, Sustainability, Seafront Development, Planning and FCERM Asset Management Teams)
 - BCP Portfolio Holder
 - BCP Ward Councillors
 - Key Local Stakeholders (Sandbanks Community Group members, local residents, Bournemouth University, Dorset Council Archeologist)
 - Statutory Consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England, National Trust, Historic England).
- We then ran a public survey between August and September 2024, asking residents and businesses for their views on the management of the sand dunes at Sandbanks. The survey received 371 responses with most respondents agreeing with the statement, “The sand dunes at Sandbanks provide important habitat for rare and protected species including sand lizards and native plants”. They also said the most important measures for managing the sand dunes at Sandbanks in the future were to:
 - Protect the sand dunes to help prevent flooding and coastal erosion,
 - Protect the sand dunes for sand lizards and other protected species,
 - Protect the sand dunes from visitors trampling on them.
- Full details of the results can be found in the final [Engagement Report](#).

Stage 2 – Identifying and Assessing Options

- We analysed all the feedback from the Stage 1 responses and identified four key themes that are important for future sand dune management:

- **Theme 1** – Protect and improve the natural environment
 - **Theme 2** – Enhance coastal protection using sand dunes
 - **Theme 3** – Improving access
 - **Theme 4** – Minimising hinterland impact and improving security.
- We held a workshop on 25 April 2025 with a range of key stakeholders to investigate technical options for managing the dunes for each of the four key themes, while determining which of these were most desirable and feasible to deliver (see Section 3.2.1 of the Supplementary Document for more information).
 - After analysing the feedback from the workshop, we developed the draft sand dune management approach for consultation in Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Consultation

- This is where we are now - running a public consultation to gather a variety of views from key stakeholders on the draft management approach outlined in this document.
- We have engaged with Internal BCP Services, BCP Portfolio Holders, BCP Ward Councillors and Natural England on the draft management approach.
- A residents briefing was also held on 12th December 2025 with six attendees who have been involved in the option development process. Feedback received during this session was highly supportive of the proposed approach, with attendees acknowledging that it clearly reflected the issues raised during previous stages of engagement.
- We are now asking the wider community for their views before any decisions are made.
- Once the consultation is closed, we will analyse the data and carefully consider the responses before making a final decision on how to manage the sand dunes at Sandbanks.

Stage 4 – Implement and Monitor

- Once a decision has been made, we will implement the new approach to sand dune management and continue to monitor the sand dunes and protected species, and learn from this process.

We will continue to communicate with the local community as we implement the agreed approach.

More information on the engagement-led approach we have taken to date can be found in the Supplementary Information document here: haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/sand-dunes-consultation.

4. The Proposed Sand Dune Management Approach

We have set out our proposals for the future management of the Sandbanks sand dunes below. The map shows the areas that each proposal would affect. After the map, you will find an explanation of the main challenges and the steps we propose to address them.

The table below provides a summary of the 13 proposals that make up the draft Sandbanks sand dune management approach. This is followed by more details about each of the proposals.

Table 1 - Details of the proposed Sand Dune Management Approach at Sandbanks (see Figure 2 above for locations)

Sand Dune Management Proposals – Summary Table	
1	Regularly clearing public pathways to the beach to maintain access
2	Develop a process for removing non-native invasive species within the dune vegetation
3	Establish a new community Sand Dune Management Group
4	Actively manage the dune plant nursery
5	Regularly removing sand which builds up against boundary walls
6	Make native plants grown in the dune nursery available to local homeowners to improve the local environment
7	Upgrade / install additional rock groynes along the Sandbanks frontage
8	Extend the dunes along the coastline in the widened beach areas
9	Periodically remove wind-blown sand that has built up on private properties
10	Define a maximum height / profile for the sand dunes and agree a process for recycling sand
11	Maintain and improve signage and rope-and-post fencing around the dunes to raise awareness and discourage trampling
12	Reinstate once vegetated dune area north of existing Phase I dunes
13	Maintaining existing groynes and continue periodic beach nourishment

4.1. The Proposals

When considering each of the proposals below, please refer to the map at the same time to see the location that could be affected by each proposal.

Proposal 1 – Regularly clearing public pathways to the beach to maintain access

Issue: Stormy winters can blow sand onto the promenade and beach pathways, causing it to build up.

Proposed solution: We propose that BCP Seafront regularly clear the public pathways to the beach to keep access open. If clearing is not possible, we would use temporary matting to support access for disabled visitors.

Proposal 2 – Develop a process for removing non-native invasive species within the dune vegetation

Issue: Invasive species can dominate native dune plants, reduce biodiversity, and prevent the sand movement needed for healthy dune ecosystems.

Proposed solution:

- Develop a process for removing invasive species within the dunes as well as plants which are not typical of sand dune habitats (i.e. brambles in existing dunes are native but need to be managed/reduced).
- Educating homeowners on what not to plant in gardens using the 'Householder Guide' suggested in Proposal 3 below.

Proposal 3 – Establish a new community Sand Dune Management Group

Issue: Management of the sand dunes will require ongoing support to ensure they continue to provide a form of natural coastal protection against erosion and continue to provide habitat for rare species.

Proposed solution:

- Create clear aims and terms of reference for the Group, including an explanation of how it works with BCP services and teams.
- Involve community Sand Dune Management Group volunteers in activities such as managing the dune plant nursery (Proposal 4), carrying out habitat surveys, removing invasive species (Proposal 6), supporting post-storm recovery, and repairing fencing (Proposal 11).
- The production of a 'Householder Guide' to provide information on garden management (Proposals 2 & 6).

Proposal 4 – Actively manage the dune plant nursery

Issue: There is currently no managed local source of native dune vegetation, leaving the sand dunes more vulnerable to erosion and making recovery slower after storm damage.

Proposed solution:

- Providing a store of vegetation to be used to extend sand dune areas and aid dune recovery following storms.
- Collecting seeds from Studland/elsewhere to develop in the nursery. This could help to increase biodiversity if it's needed in the future.

Proposal 5 – Regularly removing sand which builds up against boundary walls

Issue: Wind-blown sand can build up against buildings and walls that are not designed to support its weight.

Proposed solution: We propose regularly removing sand that builds up against boundary walls to reduce pressure on these structures and to keep the access path behind the Phase II dunes clear for residents. The timeframe and methods for sand removal will be confirmed later and will follow best-practice guidance.

Proposal 6 – Make native plants grown in the dune nursery available to local homeowners to improve the local environment

Issue: There is currently no managed local source of native dune vegetation for homeowners. This increases the risk of non-native species being planted in gardens and spreading into the dune system.

Proposed solution:

- Developing simple guidance on where exactly the vegetation can be planted, and
- Including this guidance in the ‘Householder Guide’ suggested in Proposal 3 above.

Proposal 7 – Upgrade / install additional rock groynes along the Sandbanks frontage

Issue: Opportunities to grow the sand dunes further along the coastline - providing extra coastal protection and more habitat - are limited by the narrow width of the beach caused by the current rock groyne layout.

Proposed solution:

- As part of the Poole Bay, [Poole Harbour & Wareham Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy Review](#), which is currently in development, we propose looking into whether it is technically possible and good value for money to upgrade or add new rock groynes along the Sandbanks coastline, to widen narrow sections of beach and allow dune vegetation to establish more easily.

This will include exploring options to undertake:

- Improvement to the existing end groyne north-east of the existing Phase II dunes, as well as the installation of two or three additional groynes (Figure 3), and
- Modification to the groyne at Midway Path just south of the existing Phase I dunes.

Proposal 8 – Extend the dunes along the coastline in the widened beach areas

Issue: We are limited in our ability to expand the sand dunes along the coastline because the beach is too narrow due to the current rock groyne layout. This restricts opportunities to create more habitat and strengthen coastal protection against sea-level rise and climate change.

Proposed solution:

- We propose extending the dunes along the coastline, supported by new or modified groynes, to create wider beach areas in:
 - the area north of the existing Phase II dunes, and
 - the area south of the existing Phase I dunes (subject to Proposal 7).

These extended dunes would be fenced to prevent trampling. To the north-east of the existing Phase II dunes (see Figure 3), this work would also help protect privately owned seawalls, which become exposed to wave erosion when storms lower beach levels.

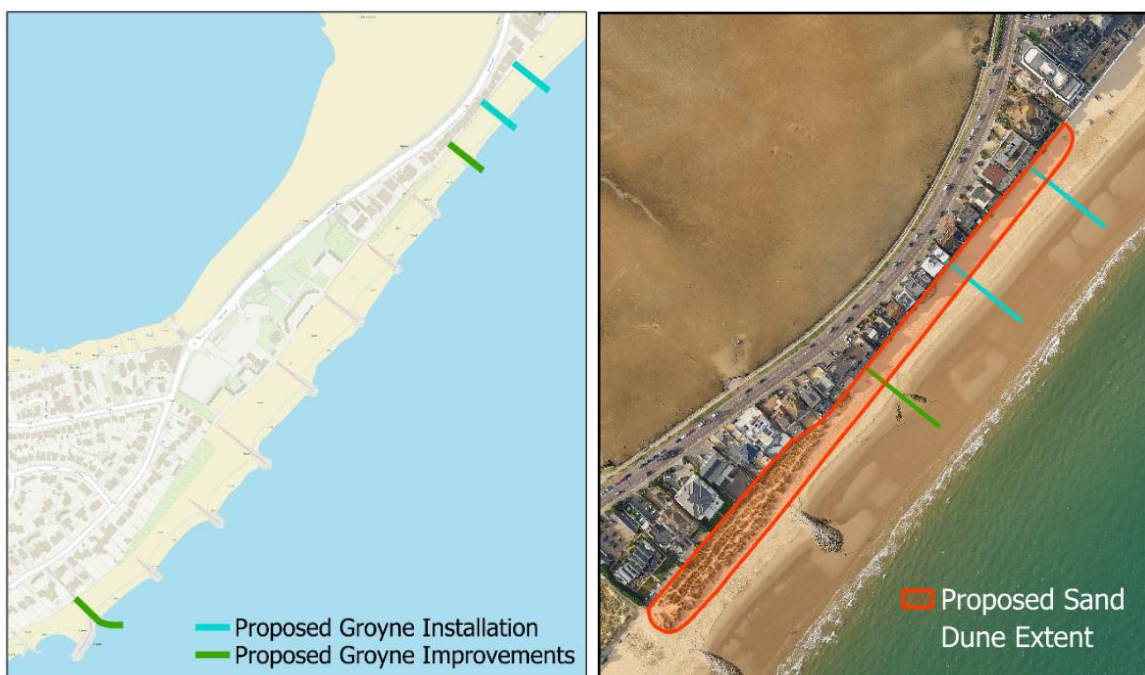


Figure 3 - Proposed installation/improvements of rock groynes along the Sandbanks frontage and proposed sand dune extent.

Proposal 9 – Periodically remove wind-blown sand that has built up on private properties

Issue: Stormy winters can blow sand into private properties behind the dunes, causing it to build up.

Proposed solution: We propose that property owners periodically remove wind-blown sand that builds up within their property boundaries behind the dunes. The timeframe and methods for sand removal will be confirmed later and will follow best-practice guidance.

Proposal 10 – Define a maximum height / profile for the sand dunes and agree a process for recycling sand

Issue: In some areas, the height and spread of the dunes cause problems such as wind-blown sand entering properties, putting pressure on structures, blocking views and access paths, and creating security issues for the land and properties behind the dunes.

Proposed solution:

- We propose setting a maximum height and shape for the dunes, along with an agreed process for recycling sand when this height is exceeded. This could include removing sand from the top of the dunes and placing it at the base or in other agreed areas.

At the south-western end of the existing Phase II dunes, large dunes can cause problems such as wind-blown sand entering properties, security issues, and restricted access. To manage this:

- A design dune profile has been created (see Figure 4).
- If surveys show the dunes have grown above this profile, we may trim the dune tops so they do not rise above the glass boundary wall behind the properties.
- We will also remove sand from the base of the glass wall to reduce pressure on the structure and to maintain access for residents.

Any sand taken from the dune tops would be placed:

- at the toe (base) of the dune,
- in the re-instated area north of the existing Phase I dunes, or
- north of the existing Phase II dunes (see Figure 5),

to help gradually build up the dune system along the coastline until new groynes can be installed to widen the beach (see Proposals 7 and 8).

- We will share the defined dune height limit and the method for recycling sand with residents so the process is clear and understood.

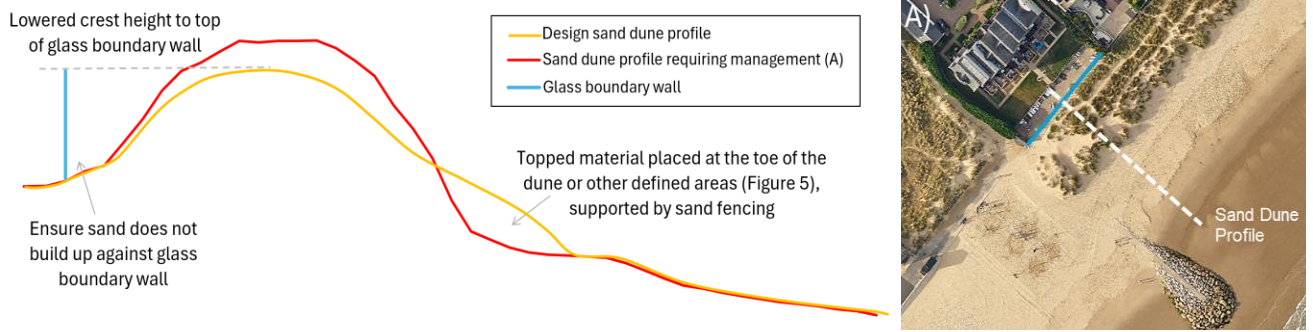


Figure 4 - Proposed management of the sand dune profile at the southern end of the Phase II dunes.



Figure 5 - Proposed material placement locations following dune topping operations

Please note that dune topping and trimming can only take place in a short window because sand lizards live in the dunes (Figure 6). Work can only be done between April and mid-May to avoid their hibernation and egg-laying periods. Managing dune height during this time also gives plants a chance to recover and allows the sand to settle, which helps make the dunes more stable and less vulnerable to disturbance during winter storms.



Figure 6 - Sand Lizards present in the Sandbanks sand dunes.

Proposal 11 – Maintain and improve signage and rope-and-post fencing around the dunes to raise awareness and discourage trampling

Issue: Excessive or repeated trampling of sand-dune habitats can reduce or destroy vegetation height and cover.

Proposed solution:

- Maintain and improve signs and rope-and-post fencing around the dunes to raise awareness and discourage trampling. Signs to include information on dune history, protected species, QR codes, and warnings against using BBQs near the dunes
- Using interpretation panels at entrance points to the beach.
- Undertaking periodic beach ranger patrols to deter antisocial behaviour.

Proposal 12 – Reinstate once vegetated dune area north of existing Phase I dunes

Issue: The sand-dune area north-east of the Phase I dunes, which was once vegetated, is now bare because of trampling and clearance for tractor access. This has reduced the habitat quality and weakened the dunes' coastal protection role.

Proposed solution:

- Reinstating the once vegetated sand dune area just north of the existing Phase I dunes to be within the existing roped-off area (Figure 7), maintaining the fencing and signage to protect the growing vegetation. Vegetation and material used to reinstate this area of dune would be taken from the sand dune nursery (see Proposal 4 above) and/or following dune topping operations carried out as part of Proposal 10 above.
- Keeping access routes from the car park, around the back of this dune area, for people and machinery.

- Moving the dog bin away from the existing Phase I sand dunes to the car park to reduce footfall close to these dunes.
- Monitoring dune growth through surveys.
- Potentially installing a CoastSnap point.



Figure 7 - Roped off area of sand dune to be reinstated north of the Phase I dunes.

Proposal 13 – Maintaining existing groynes and continue periodic beach nourishment

Issue: Without groynes to maintain a wide beach, sand dunes would not be able to form and would be more easily eroded during storms. If the dunes were lost, the seawalls behind them would be exposed and could fail, allowing water to flood nearby properties.

Proposed solution: We propose maintaining the existing groynes and continuing periodic beach nourishment to preserve beach width, supporting the retention and growth of the dunes.

4.2. Proposed Sand Dune Management Timeline

Following discussions about potential sand-dune management activities, we have prepared a draft management timeline (Figure 8) that outlines broad target timeframes for each activity. These timeframes will be refined and confirmed in collaboration with the wider community.

The insights gained from developing a new approach to managing the sand dunes at Sandbanks will help inform the management of other dune systems across the BCP area in future, supporting the sustainable management of these important habitats.

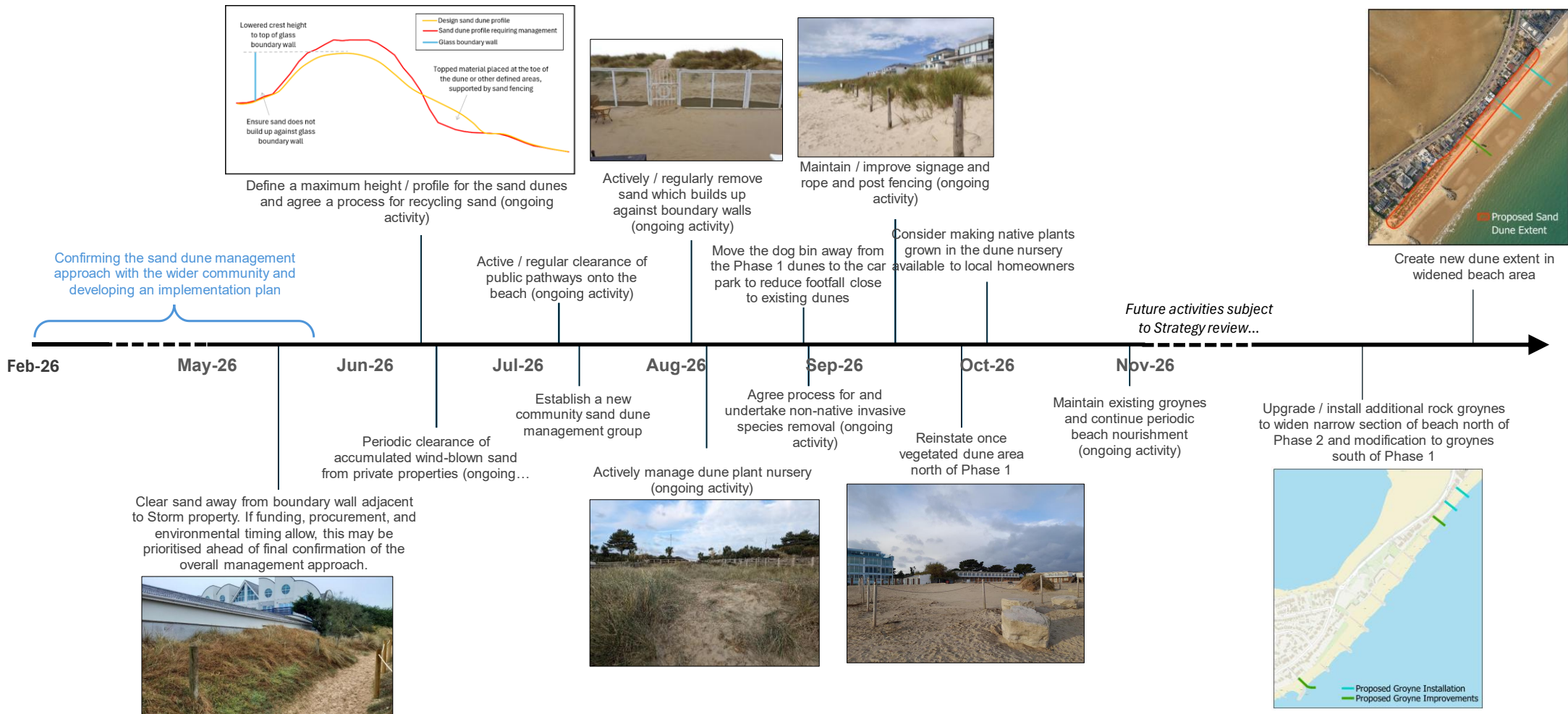


Figure 8 - Proposed Sand Dune Management Timeline

5. Implementation

Once the proposed approach has been discussed and agreed with the wider community, we will develop an action plan to guide implementation and monitoring of the new sand dune management measures. This will include periodic reviews so that we can learn from progress and make adjustments if needed.

As shown in the draft management timeline, works to remove sand from the boundary wall along the section of Loverose Way connecting Banks Road to the seafront (Figure 9) may need to be prioritised ahead of final confirmation of the overall management approach. This is due to health and safety concerns, as accumulated sand could potentially affect the structural stability of the wall. If funding, procurement, and environmental timing allow, the intention is to carry out these works sometime in 2026.



Figure 9 - Sand build-up along boundary wall at Sandbanks, posing structural stability issues.

6. Have your say...

We would like to hear your views on the proposed management approach for the sand dunes at Sandbanks.

Please note that, no decisions have been made at this stage and will only be considered once your feedback has been carefully assessed.

After reading the information in this document, please give us your feedback by completing our online survey, with paper copies available at your local library or to download on the main consultation page: haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/sand-dunes-consultation.

This consultation will close at **23:59pm on 29 March 2026**.

If you have any questions or need the survey in a different format, please email coastal@bcpccouncil.gov.uk.

7. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **What is dune face erosion/cliffing?** When waves or storms cut into the front of the dune, creating a steep face and potentially exposing vegetation roots.
- **What is trampling?** Damage caused by people walking over dune vegetation, reducing its ability to hold the sand in place.
- **What is sand loading?** The build-up of sand against walls or other structures, applying weight which could result in damage.
- **What species are protected on the sand dunes and why does the Council have to protect them?** The sand dunes at Sandbanks provide a structurally complex habitat for sand lizards which are a rare and protected species. The species is afforded national protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as well as European protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 1994. In turn, the sand dunes require protection to maintain this habitat. Other native reptiles can also be found on or very close to the beach such as grass snakes and adders which, like sand lizards, are protected though not to such a high level.
- **What is a CoastSnap point?** A fixed post where the public can take photos of the coast, helping to track beach and dune changes over time.
- **What is an interpretation panel?** A larger information board that explains the purpose of the dunes and the importance of protecting them for coastal protection and habitat conservation purposes.
- **What is beach nourishment?** Placing new sand onto the beach to replace what has been lost through erosion.
- **What is dune establishment?** Helping new dunes form or damaged dunes recover, through planting of vegetation or installing sand-trapping measures.
- **What are rock groynes?** Hard engineering structures built from rock extending perpendicular from the shore into the sea to trap sand and build up the beach, preventing erosion.
- **What is meant by 'design sand dune profile'?** The desired and planned shape and height of a sand dune.
- **What is the toe of the dune? The front base of the dune where it meets the beach and where erosion usually begins.**
- **Why are we focusing on Sandbanks?** The sand dunes at Sandbanks were originally restored to protect the coastline from erosion. Since then, limited management has taken place, and their location within an urban setting presents several challenges that must be carefully considered. The insights gained from developing this new management approach will help guide sustainable management of other dune systems across the BCP area in the coming years.
- **How will my views be used?** Once the consultation has closed, we will analyse the data and carefully consider your responses before making a final decision on how to manage the sand dunes at Sandbanks, as part of the [Sandbanks Dune Management Study](#).

Once a decision has been made, we will implement the new approach to sand dune management and continue to monitor the sand dunes and protected species, and learn from this process.

We will continue to communicate with the local community as we implement the agreed approach.

Please note that this list of FAQs may change during the consultation period. For an up-to-date list, please refer to the FAQ document on the main consultation page:

haveyoursay.bccouncil.gov.uk/sand-dunes-consultation.