

South-east Dorset is one of the areas in the region which is suffering from invasion by common Rhododendron. Both its internationally important heathlands and its deciduous woodlands are being overtaken by this dark alien species. The native flora and fauna is ousted. But the Rhododendron is no longer having it all its own way. A number of initiatives are taking place to turn the tide.

The Return of the Natives Project is one such initiative aimed at clearing the dark intimidating shrub from waysides and woodlands to allow the public to again enjoy the attractive and native woodland trees and wildflowers along rights of way in East Dorset District Council area.. The Project is currently focused on the Ferndown Stour and Forest Trailway which runs alongside a number of woodlands around Hampreston which are heavily invaded by Rhododendron. Dr. Lesley Haskins, Project leader explains “we have already started clearing Rhododendron from two old oak woodlands and suddenly trailway users can actually see the trees again and the wildflowers will soon be back for them to enjoy. It is proving so worthwhile. But there is so much more to do.” Anybody able to help should contact her on 01202 889717.