



National Parks

*Supporting people, places,
climate & nature*

National Parks: supporting people, places, climate and nature

Foreword

Seventy years ago Britain's National Parks were established to help the country recover and rebuild following the upheavals of a world war. For the first time our finest landscapes were protected and public access promoted for the refreshment of mind and body alike. Today, faced with a global pandemic, climate and biodiversity crises, the opportunity for National Parks to provide lasting solutions for people and nature has never been greater.

National Parks are unique within the protected landscapes family. We have legal duties and responsibilities for statutory planning, plus an enhancement purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas.

In the following pages we show some of the ways in which National Parks are

responding to unprecedented modern challenges, working at scale and across conventional boundaries with a wide range of partners. From the restoration of upland peat bogs across northern England to an ambitious national partnership connecting young people with nature; from pioneering approaches to sustainable transport and tourism to drawing up nature recovery blueprints for all our National Parks.

Since 2019 the Landscapes Review has laid down a challenge for our special places. This is how we are responding: ambitious, inclusive and innovative – but, above all, getting on with it.

Andrew McCloy
Chair, National Parks England



Contents

1 Climate Leadership	5	2 Landscapes for Everyone	13	3 Wildlife and Nature Recovery	25
Strengthening our climate resilience	6	Connecting people with our national landscapes	14	Assessing, prioritising and protecting	26
Sustainable tourism	8	Health and Wellbeing	18	Nature Recovery Networks	29
Transport	10				
				4 Sustainable Farming and Land Management	33

SECTION 1

Climate Leadership





Strengthening our climate resilience

Our achievements

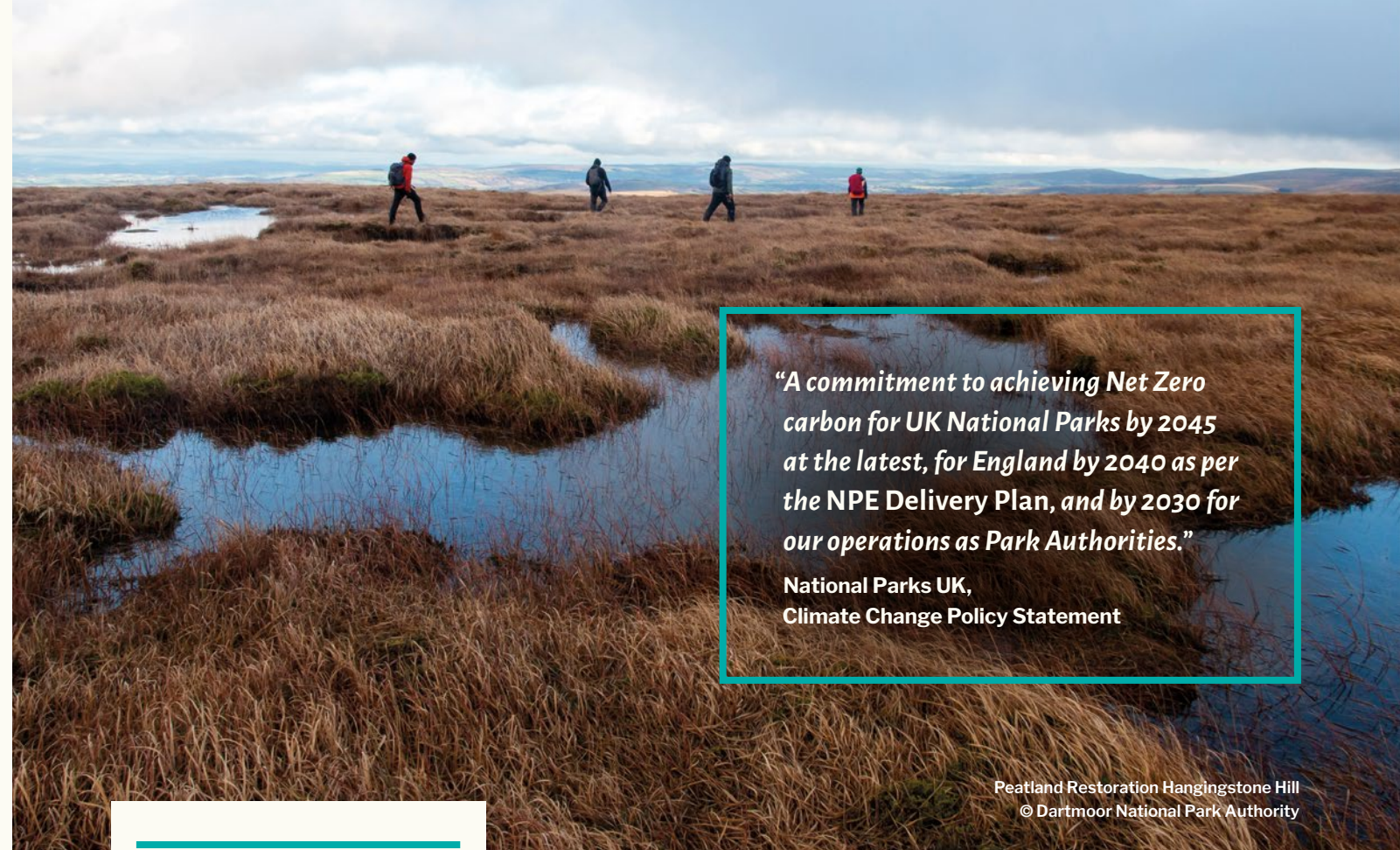
Our [Delivery Plan for Climate Leadership](#) positions National Parks as key actors at the local, national, and international level. As part of this, National Parks are working, at scale, to achieve rapid action towards Net Zero in our parks. We have established a UK-wide Climate Change Policy Statement, and are working collaboratively with partners locally and nationally to achieve Net Zero carbon for English National Parks by 2040.

The Climate Change Conference of the Parties (CoP26) in November 2021 was a key focus of the Government’s environmental and international agenda. The UK National Parks play a vital role in delivering nature-based solutions, and CoP26 reaffirmed our vision for achieving Net Zero with Nature (NZWN), with the UK National Parks as a focus for climate action and nature recovery. With interest in the UK carbon markets increasing, NZWN offers a secure funding mechanism for delivering projects across the National Park family. Our new financing scheme Revere: Investing in Nature Capital, is our collaboration with pro bono partners Palladium. This UK initiative aims to create a sustainable funding model for restoring National Park nature.

The Landscapes Review highlights the importance of restoring and protecting peatland for nature recovery, and echoes that this is vital to combatting the effects of climate change. We have collaborative projects across the National Parks which are addressing this. Dartmoor’s peat soils, for example, store an estimated 10 million tonnes of carbon - equivalent to an entire year of carbon dioxide emissions from UK industry. Working in partnership is critical to helping restore and protect this precious landscape.



Fix the Fells © National Trust



“A commitment to achieving Net Zero carbon for UK National Parks by 2045 at the latest, for England by 2040 as per the NPE Delivery Plan, and by 2030 for our operations as Park Authorities.”

**National Parks UK,
Climate Change Policy Statement**

Peatland Restoration Hangingstone Hill
© Dartmoor National Park Authority

Dartmoor National Park’s collaborative work across the Southwest as part of the [Southwest Peatland Project](#), is seeing large-scale peatland recovery which includes 300 ha of peat restoration in Dartmoor alone. The partnership is working to restore damaged peatland across Bodmin, Dartmoor and Exmoor. Developed in 2018, £2m funding was secured to restore 1,680 ha of peatland between 2018 and 2021 with further funding now announced enabling another ambitious four year programme of restoration activity (2500 ha) across the South West. The projects are being closely monitored in collaboration with [University of Exeter](#).

Our future aspirations

In order to robustly assess our progress as climate leaders, we are establishing a baseline for National Park Authorities (NPAs) to monitor the effectiveness of our efforts to cut emissions. With individual NPAs developing a standard approach to baseline and metrics for achieving Net Zero, it includes scenarios and the best trajectory for each National Park to reach their carbon target. The first tranche of work included the Lake District, South Downs and the Broads Authority. The Lake District have a park budget and Net Zero target now embedded in the management plan, with the Broads and South Downs to follow suit. Baseline budgets will now follow for all NPAs.

On an international level, 26 of the world’s largest organisations managing protected landscapes - led by UK National Parks - signed the first ever joint statement on climate change and biodiversity in the lead up to CoP26. This group of representatives, from national parks across the world including Africa, Korea and the UK, came together to urge Governments to recognise and support our key role addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. With interest emerging from other countries, we intend on building on this international collaboration and cooperation for future activities.

Sustainable tourism

National Parks have seen a marked increase in and diversity of visitors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This highlights the importance of National Parks as places for healing and building a resilient society, and proves the benefit green spaces can bring for health and wellbeing [see Green Halo under our Landscapes for Everyone section]. However, we have also seen challenges – increasing litter, verge parking and over-trodden honeypot sites. National Parks therefore play a key role in providing sustainable tourism opportunities, especially in the wake of the climate emergency. We believe that National Parks are for everyone, and it is important that they are welcoming and cared-for spaces for new and existing visitors, which remain enjoyable for all for many years to come.

Our achievements

We have a proud history in supporting and promoting sustainable tourism, such as the Lake District [Fix the Fells](#) initiative which protects Lakeland fells from erosion by repairing and maintaining the upland paths. More recently, the [National Parks Experience Collection](#) has been established, placing National Parks as key leaders in climate action. This collaborative effort, along with the forthcoming publication of our 'Regenerative Tourism' approach, addresses the importance of sustainable destination management. This approach goes beyond preventing damage to our environment, and actively seeks to regenerate local areas with a positive impact on those communities and their local economies. This contributes tangibly towards the places and communities in which we operate.



In February 2019, National Park Authorities launched the [National Parks Experience Collection](#). This is the first time National Parks across England have worked together to develop a joined-up programme for sustainable tourism. It is a collection of 87 immersive experiences, from exploring Dartmoor on horseback to stargazing in Northumberland, in nine of England's National Parks that are operated by expert local businesses. A proportion of the booking fees are reinvested into sustainable tourism initiatives.

Examining a fossil, North York Moors, National Parks Experience Collection
© David Wildey Photography

The National Parks Experience Collection has supported over 150 businesses across 9 National Parks and enabled National Parks to run 250 training workshops for businesses.

During most years, 94m visitors come to the National Parks and surrounding areas.

The £40,000 spent on litter clearance in the Peak District National Park could fund a full-time ranger for a year.

Since 2006 New Forest National Park has awarded £2.4m in grants to over 300 projects that help improve the sustainability of the National Park. The fund aims to seek improvements in the following areas:

- improving opportunities for wildlife and habitat
- reducing carbon emissions
- connecting new groups to nature

Their [Sustainable Communities Fund](#) has supported many initiatives, including the development of a community shop, energy improvements to community buildings, electric vehicle charge points, interpretation panels, and wild play zones. Other support in recent years includes:

- SpudWORKS creative hub in Sway, to develop a new collaborative project engaging diverse communities in the landscape of the New Forest National Park and helping to protect and promote its special qualities
- The New Forest Live at Home scheme to organise a series of Forest visits for older people to get outdoors in a safe and supported way and sample New Forest Marque products
- The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project hosted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, working with landowners and volunteers to stop the spread of invasive non-native plants along watercourses



Hope Valley Explorer Bus
© Peak District National Park Authority

Transport

Our achievements

Our Partnership Management Plans are helping to deliver action on reducing emissions and adapting to the climate emergency on a landscape scale. We have already taken action to encourage visitors to make a shift to walking and cycling, and have made it easier to use electric/hybrid cars with the introduction of more e-charging points at our visitor centres.

We have piloted sustainable transport initiatives in both the Lake District and the Peak District. In the Peak District, this includes working with 6 transport authorities on the Bus Service Improvement Plans, supporting the launch of the Staffordshire Council Rural Mobility Fund project and operating the Hope Valley Visitor Experience bus service. In the Lake District, Summer 2021 saw park and ride and park and sail initiatives being trialled in Keswick and Buttermere, and included a communications programme with the public around parking and sustainable and active travel. Options including boats, bikes and walking routes are also being promoted.

The Lake District National Park is developing a new approach to visitor movement through close working with the transport authority, Cumbria County Council. This includes the development of multi-user trails, such as the South Windermere Trail, due to be completed in Spring 2022. The Keswick to Threlkeld Trail, which opened in December 2020, welcomed 250,000 users in its first 8 months. Approaches to reduce the need to use a car are being trialled in key locations through park and ride services. For example, a free shuttle bus from Cockermouth to Buttermere has been trialled, as well as a park and ride shuttle bus in Wasdale. The shuttlebus is a dog-friendly vehicle and has space for a wheelchair. On demand bus services are also being considered through the Bus Improvement Strategy.

The Broads Authority now has 18 sites with charging pillars for boats, and has installed 40 pillars across them, with further rollout being explored.

Our future aspirations

The Campaign for National Parks (CNP) report [National Parks and the Climate Emergency](#), states that all NPAs have identified ways of reducing the carbon emissions of their own activities. This includes initiatives such as replacing pool cars with electric vehicles (EVs), making buildings more efficient and increasing the number of EV charging points.

Reducing emissions isn't limited to cars - the Broads Authority have installed charging pillars which are used for powering onboard systems on boats. These would usually be powered by running the onboard diesel engine to generate electricity, so the new pillars are more climate friendly.

We welcome the Government's Net Zero strategy but wish to see the swift development of delivery policies, programmes, adequately funded to enable objectives around climate change to be achieved. This is especially urgent for land management, farming and transport, significant sectors for national parks.



How Hill, Summer
© Broads Authority

The Broads Authority has set a Net Zero target by 2030, and has already purchased electric vehicles for their road fleet and switched to bio-fuel for construction equipment where there are no viable electric/zero emission versions available. Other National Parks are working with their respective local authorities to increase the number of e-charging points available to visitors - in the New Forest, for example, there are now approximately 60 EV charging points across the National Park, provided by the local authorities.

SECTION 2

Landscapes for Everyone



Connecting people with our national landscapes

Our achievements

The Landscapes Review highlights the importance that beautiful places play in finding spiritual and physical enrichment. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated this even more, with more people discovering and re-discovering our landscapes, recognising the important part they play in our lives. These experiences underline the importance of ensuring **National Parks** are accessible to all. Everyone should be able to discover and engage with protected landscapes. We believe National Parks can benefit the health and wellbeing of the whole nation.

National Park Authorities recognise that there are many local residents in and around the Parks who would benefit from engaging more with our protected landscapes. These voices need to be amplified and heard more strongly, so ensuring National Parks can retain and increase levels of engagement by under-represented groups, including from ethnically diverse backgrounds, disabled people, and people from low socio-economic backgrounds.

As well as being founding partners of the **Access Unlimited Coalition**, which brings together outdoor and residential providers to enable more diverse audiences to connect with nature, National Parks share a community of practice and submit joint bids, including to the **Green Recovery Challenge Fund**. One such joint bid will enable **Peak District Mosaic**, **Peak District National Park**, **Yorkshire Dales National Park** and **North York Moors National Park** to connect ethnic minority communities with nature. This includes outdoor activity days and training events developing skills, confidence and awareness of the benefits of National Landscapes. It will also provide new employment, volunteering and training opportunities for these communities and entry into the sector, using the assets of these National Parks to better connect with surrounding conurbations.

Mosaic Walk
© Broads Authority



Generation Green, funded by the **Green Recovery Challenge Fund**, has been adopted across the National Parks and reflects a community of practice. It brings together several outdoor and residential providers, including **YHA**, **Scouts and Guides**, **Outward Bound**, **Field Studies Council** and all English National Park Authorities. With **£2.6m** funding, its **Generation Green** programme is enabling **100,000** young people to connect with nature, prioritising young people from ethnic minorities, disadvantaged backgrounds and coastal communities. It includes:

- retaining 20 jobs
- creating 10 new jobs
- 1 paid internship
- 30 kickstart placements
- 7 apprenticeships
- 659 skilled volunteer roles in the outdoor sector

Throughout the pandemic, National Park Authorities have worked hard to keep people safe, support their rural communities, and offer opportunities for the public to thrive from what nature provides us. Many of the groups who enjoyed and benefitted from visiting their National Park previously, and others that have discovered nature as a way to improve wellbeing, were unable to visit in 2020. We recognise the importance of nature to young people and how our landscapes can play a special part to help people discover or re-connect with nature.

Recover in Nature is supporting the hardest hit groups to recover and connect with nature following the lockdowns. **Northumberland National Park's** Engagement Officer has designed a programme to work with refugee and asylum seekers, through **The Comfrey Project**. This supports people to learn new skills through nature, such as building bird hides, feeders and hurdles. Working with partner organisations, including **Black Nature in Residence** and **Challenge Northumberland**, participants are identified through a 'stepping stone' organisation, and can actively help design activities and feedback to help shape future activities. Barriers such as transport, activity costs and food are removed as much as possible including offering 50% of transport costs, or up to 100% if no match funding is available.



Comfrey project
© Kate Buckingham, Northumberland National Park Authority

Supported by Arts Council England, the South Downs National Park has appointed a **Writer in Residence**, Alinah Azadeh, who will be telling stories of and from this special landscape, exploring themes of diversity, climate, and resilience. She is also supporting Black, Asian and ethnically diverse writers, people of colour and those whose voices have not been heard, to share their voices, stories and experiences through retreats, workshops, podcasts, walks and live events.



Writers in Residence Project, South Downs National Park © Alinah Azadeh



Boy examining local nature © Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Dartmoor National Park Junior Ranger programme, established in 2015, supports teenagers who have become disconnected from the natural environment but care passionately about environmental issues, to take a hands-on approach to engaging with nature. They get real-world experience working alongside Rangers undertaking practical conservation work. It supports those who may wish to pursue a career in the countryside, or those who find academic environments difficult. Since 2019, it has grown to provide

a progression route for 15-19 year-olds with a Youth Rangers programme. These youth have the opportunity to tackle more challenging tasks, undertake conservation volunteering with other conservation organisations and more responsibility for new recruits to the Junior Rangers programme. Funding via the Generation Green stream has now enabled Dartmoor to employ a Youth Engagement Ranger – helping to increase the number and diversity of activities and attracting more young people.

National Parks access a number of funding streams to engage with young people, such as the **Sustainable Communities Grant** which offers microgrants for community projects over a number of years. The South Downs National Park **Youth Action Fund** enables young people to take part in activities leading to positive social and environmental action in some beautiful locations in the National Park, including:

- 50 young people with complex needs including ADHD, Autism, ODD and global learning delay will get hands-on in managing heathland near East Clayton Farm, West Sussex
- 10 young refugees and asylum seekers will participate in a South Downs discovery project with the Rural Refugee Network
- 2,000 young people in Lewes will help take action to help the environment in their local area through the Green United initiative
- 10 girls with mental health challenges will take part in a “Space to Breathe” summer camp



Junior Rangers, Dartmoor National Park © Orlando Rutter

Health and Wellbeing

Our achievements

Our National Parks were created at a time when health and wellbeing first emerged as a national concern following World War II and alongside the creation of the NHS. The importance of National Parks to our own health and wellbeing, that of our communities and of nature, has never been greater. As we grapple with the climate emergency, the recovery of our economy and our national health and wellbeing, National Parks continue to

“There can be few national purposes which, at so modest a cost, offer so large a prospect of health-giving happiness for the people.”

John Dower, 1945

play a pivotal role in recovery. Many NPAs have been running and supporting health schemes for a number of years, such as the New Forest Lepe Walking for Health scheme. At the National level, a high-level accord



“The digital detox was a great idea to get everyone off their phones and involved in the activities. My favourite part was on the boat, when we saw dolphins and seals.”

Henry - aged 11, from the Digital Detox Camp, North York Moors National Park

Digital Detox
© North York Moors National Park Authority

between Public Health England (PHE) and National Parks England (NPE) was signed in September 2017. Under this partnership, a strategic steering group, including NPA members, Public Health teams, PHE, and National Park Health Leads, have developed a framework for Health and Wellbeing in protected landscapes. Since the **Landscapes Review** was published, National Parks have continued this great work in supporting the nation's health and wellbeing.

The framework for Health and Wellbeing has been adopted by all National Parks in England. Actions are grouped in three key thematic areas - 'Prevent, Restore, Excel'. These include developing a programme for skills and continuous learning with key NPA staff and local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), PHE, and Local Authorities, as well as the development of new socially prescribed opportunities with partners.

As part of our joint working on social prescribing, the Peak District National Park works with two of the Government's green social prescribing test and learn pilots which aim to connect people with nature to improve mental wellbeing. South Downs National Park is also working closely with social prescribers across the area, such as a *Mindful Walk* pilot with a Primary Care Network in West Sussex.

Young Rangers from the North York Moors National Park attended a pilot 'digital detox' camp in August 2021. This helped address the impact on young people's mental health from time spent indoors in a virtual world through digital technology, escalated by the pandemic. The aim was to increase young people's connection with nature, improve mental health, and reduce time using digital technology. The Young Rangers had a truly immersive experience in nature.

Activities included:

- Emotion mapping walk – focusing on an individual's connection with a specific place, capturing emotional links with their environment, starting in daylight and finishing in darkness
- Nature boat trip – a 2-hour boat trip along the North York Moors coastline, looking at cliff erosion and marine life - a completely different viewpoint of the National Park
- Seashore safari – time spent looking for creatures in the rock pools, fossil hunting and walking barefoot on the beach

Young Rangers went through a process of positive contact, both through socialising and with the natural environment, offering a restorative effect for mental health and wellbeing.

A five-year programme of Public Health Fellowships, in partnership with Health Education England, has started. This initiative means that trainee Public Health Specialty Registrars are now based in National Parks, working on how greenspace and nature can address health inequalities. Two placements have already developed a sustainability assessment tool for the sector and have also developed a New Forest National Park Health and Wellbeing strategy involving 40 organisations in and around the National Park.

We understand the importance of National Parks as places for healing and building a resilient society, and the benefit that green spaces can bring for health and wellbeing. **The Green Halo Partnership**, which began in the New Forest National Park in 2016, shows how our most precious landscapes can work in harmony with a thriving, economically successful community. The initiative brings together businesses, communities, charities and universities, ensuring that the special areas in and around the New Forest National Park flourish as an integral part of how we work and live. Working in partnership with a wide range of organisations, across business, academia and conservation, **Green Halo** has inspired individual initiatives, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund Living Waters project to create and restore habitats on Beaulieu River in the New Forest.

“The benefits we get from nature are not constrained by boundaries, and neither should our ambition”

Green Halo Partnership

Peak District National Park offers a high level of support to those who would otherwise be unable to enjoy the National Park through poor health or disability, low income, social isolation or old age. **Peak Park Health walks** are available to residents of the Derbyshire Dales and High Peak regions and are ideal for less confident walkers. These free monthly walks are supported by the Peak District Foundation and delivered by rangers throughout the National Park on easy paths with no stiles. They offer fresh air, exercise and good company. Community transport to the start of each walk is available to eligible walkers at no cost.

The Green Halo Partnership has enabled many more people to access our landscapes. Examples of initiatives to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing in the New Forest National Park include:

- An annual walking festival, where more than 2,000 people join 80 guided walks, of varying lengths and levels of difficulty, to find out about caring for the Forest
- Walking for Health groups that run weekly short and easy walks to help people become more active
- An inclusive cycling charity, PEDALL, which takes people with disabilities out for cycle rides using a fleet of specially adapted bikes



Inclusive cycling charity PEDALL, part of the Green Halo Partnership © Pedall

In March 2021, NPE presented its Health and Wellbeing work to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for National Parks. During this session, NPE highlighted the work being done with academic institutions and how best practice is shared with health sector clusters. A Nature Health Network, set up by Southern National Park Authorities, PHE, and Bournemouth University, has led to the development

of a network that meets monthly to hear from speakers, share knowledge, make connections, and develop projects.

As previously described, one of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic was that more people visited our National Parks. At the same time, the National Parks also faced the challenge of supporting people to continue to enjoy and engage with the National Parks,

even if they were unable to leave their house. National Parks responded to this challenge, with some offering activities including virtual tours, talks and photo competitions. By offering a virtual experience, helping to bring the outdoors indoors, National Parks were able to increase geographical reach and develop relationships across boundaries.

During the pandemic, when everyone was asked to stay at home, many National Parks brought the ‘outdoors indoors’. The South Downs National Park used its digital channels to bring the National Park to people in their homes through live guided walks, talks, nature spotting, storytelling, quizzes, photo competitions and more. Its online events reached over 300,000 people.

In Dartmoor, the Outreach & Understanding and Communications Teams took their offers into the virtual world provided by social media, YouTube, virtual talks, events and festivals. This included geology and archaeology talks from experts and virtual festivals, with illustrated talks on the Black Death, Military on Dartmoor and the History of Dartmoor in 10 objects. This enabled them to reach different audiences, including younger people who may otherwise have been working, and those who would not have travelled. A one-day face-to-face Postbridge Heritage event was supported by an online Heritage Festival. Dartmoor National Park are now exploring how to continue providing virtual events into the future as a ‘blended’ approach to maintain contacts and to continue reaching new audiences.



Following a three-year partnership as part of a health and wellbeing project called **Moor to Enjoy**, the public health teams at Somerset and Devon County Councils and Exmoor National Park Authority are now running the FUN project - Families United through Nature. It includes activities such as planting giant sunflowers, making bird feeders and woodland activities. This project will continue to engage with families to give children the best start in life possible, particularly following the return to school post-COVID. FUN is being developed in partnership with parents and will engage families in nature-based activities to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in West Somerset.



Volunteers clearing rhododendron, part of the Greenprint for Green Recovery project © New Forest National Park Authority

Our future aspirations

Following on from the development of the Nature Health Network, a five-year programme of Public Health Fellowships, in partnership with Health Education England, has started. This has established an initiative whereby trainee Public Health Specialty Registrars are now based in National Parks, working on how greenspace and nature can address health inequalities. In addition, the Greenprint for Green Recovery, a collaboration between local councils, universities, New Forest National Park and others, is developing new ways to rebuild the economy in a way which reduces our impact on climate and nature. Learnings from this initiative can then be developed and used to support a green recovery across our national parks. It is through these pioneering projects, integrating and embedding health and

wellbeing initiatives directly through the national parks, that the pivotal role protected landscapes play in our lives can be realised.

To strengthen the work National Parks are doing to encourage diversity of access to, and experience of, green and blue spaces, we are collaborating with **All the Elements**. This community of organisations and individuals are working to increase diversity in the UK outdoors. By scoping out what already exists within and outside of National Park Authorities, and working with organisations involved in supporting better inclusion in protected landscapes, we will be able to strengthen our collective work across the UK National Park family to enable better access and encourage more diversity.

The Greenprint for Green Recovery has 5 priorities:

- Working with nature to reduce our carbon emissions
- Improving people's physical and mental wellbeing through nature
- Protecting and improving our green and blue environment
- Designing more sustainable places
- Growing green skills and jobs across the region

SECTION 3

Wildlife and Nature Recovery



South Downs National Park Authority
#ReNature campaign © Dick Hawkes

Assessing, prioritising and protecting

Our achievements

The decline in nature has been well documented and National Parks have not been immune to the effects which have contributed to this. The latest national State of Nature report revealed that 41 per cent of UK species studied have declined, and some 133 species have already been lost since 1500. The Landscapes Review sets out the important role protected landscapes can and should play in assessing and responding to the challenges presented by nature decline. We are working towards the Government's 30 x 30

target, and our **Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks** reflects how National Parks sit at the heart of the nations' nature recovery network, where wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained and restored.

Monitoring and responding to the changes and challenges faced by our landscapes is vital for protecting them for future generations. Each National Park Authority (NPA) has set out a clear vision for prioritising where nature recovery is most needed, mapping and setting high level creation and

restoration targets. These plans also show how we will work collaboratively with other stakeholders to monitor and support nature.

One habitat of particular significance is areas of peatland, among the most valuable ecosystems on earth. Our protection projects, such as **Moors for the Future** and the newly-formed **Great North Bog** consortium, are examples of the how we have assessed, and are recovering, these special environments in which rare plants, invertebrates and reptiles thrive.

The partnership across the great North Bog includes 4 National Parks and 3 AONBs.

The 3 leading peatland programmes have restored about 1100km²:

- Yorkshire Peat Partnership – 323km²
- North Pennines AONB Partnership – 350km²
- Moors for the Future Partnership – 454km²

This is a great start, but despite this massive effort it is still less than 20% of the total area. This is why we're coming together across the north to pool skills and make a revolutionary change in the rate of restoration of England's upland peatland.

Our nationwide collaborations, with partners such as the AONBs, are an integral part of our nature recovery strategy. Big Chalk, a large-scale collaboration between South Downs National Park and other partners including AONBs, landowners, farmers, and local communities, is building resilience in our calcareous landscapes (chalk and limestone). These special landscapes, known as miniature rainforests, provide the perfect conditions for some of our rarest plants and invertebrates. Up to 40 different species of plant can be found in one square metre of chalkland.

The Big Chalk project is one of the largest scale recovery projects in England, covering an area of over 10,500 sq km.



Holly Blue Butterfly
© Jane Chandler

Moors for the Future in the Peak District National Park and South Pennines is a pioneering peatland monitoring and restoration programme. The project monitors changes to vegetation cover and type, researches how water behaves on the moors, and tracks the fortunes of moorland wildlife. It helps us understand how effective our conservation work is and helps to assess and quantify the benefits of our work.

As part of the **Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership**, which includes over 50 partners including Northumberland National Park, North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales National Park, Nidderdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB, we are helping to conserve and enhance the natural heritage of the northern uplands. Projects, such as curlew conservation, are increasing resilience in these landscapes, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future. This can also be seen with Dartmoor National Park Authority's work around ancient woodland restoration, such as Fingle Wood. Supporting historic woodland environments is crucial for nature recovery. Ancient woodland is the UK's most biodiverse land habitat in the UK, and it is vital that these precious areas are preserved, to enable rare and diverse species found there to thrive.

Fingle Wood is a 350 ha woodland in the Teign Valley, Dartmoor National Park. The Woodland Trust refer to the first phase of restoration, as 'first aid', with 242 ha of ancient woodland restored so far.

- 63 species of bird were recorded during the breeding bird survey. Of these, 18 species are on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red or Amber lists and two are schedule 1 protected species
- 14 species of butterfly including pearl-bordered fritillary, marbled white, large and small skipper, ringlet, peacock, red admiral and silver-washed fritillary
- At least 12 of the 17 UK bat species, including the rare barbastelle, have been recorded
- Hazel dormice – the Wood is a stronghold for this species, and the project team are working with PTES and University College London to monitor the population

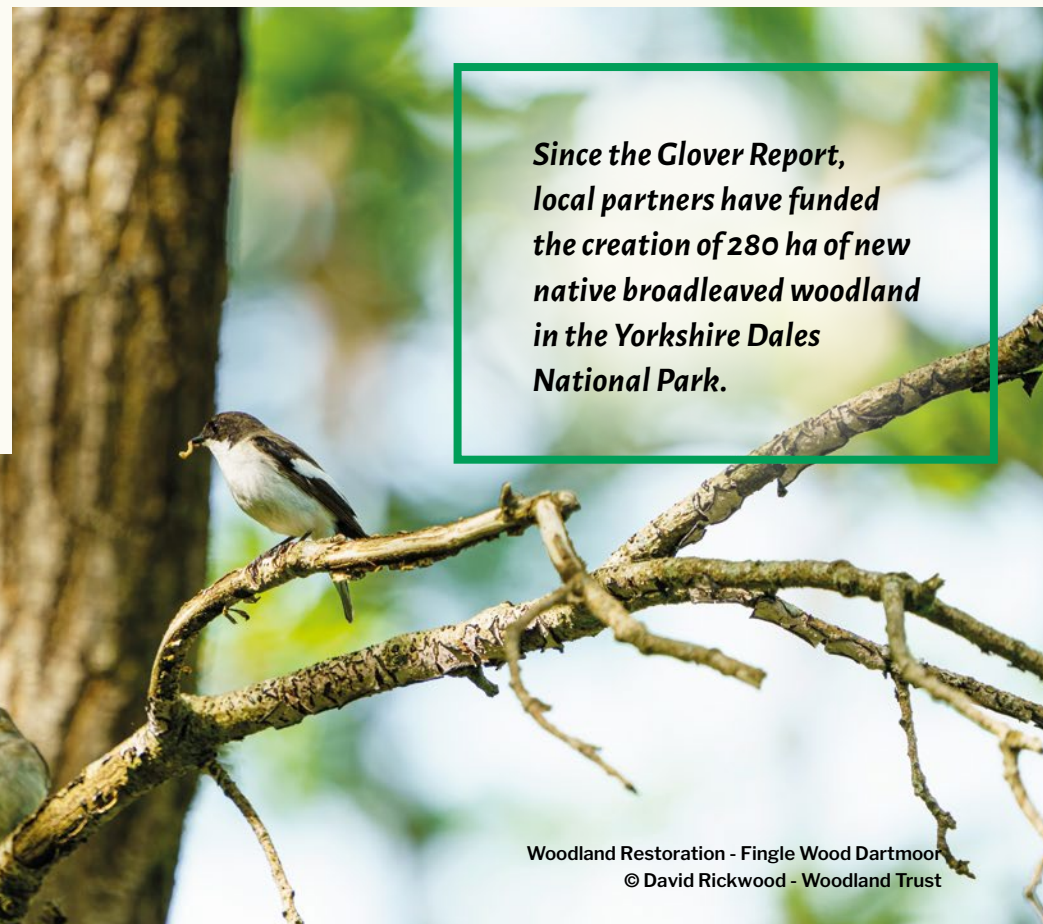
Source: Woodland Trust

Curlew conservation – The Northern Upland Chain (NUC) Local Nature Partnership has a working group focussed on improving conservation prospects for curlew across the NUC, working with farmers and land-managers. The priorities are understanding how curlews use the landscape, empowering curlew-friendly farming, building public support and demonstrating the power of partnerships. A work programme focusses on actions that will have the most impact for curlews. This includes:

- Data – ensuring access to the most up to date, relevant data to inform conservation action and measure the success of interventions

- Land management advice – production of an advisory leaflet to help land managers across the whole NUCLNP area to improve conditions for curlews on their land
- A curlew 'hotspots' project – focussing in on the prime areas for curlews within the NUCLNP to ensure the best areas remain the best
- Communications – highlighting the plight of the curlew and the ways the NUCLNP is trying to help

Source: Northern Upland Chain LNP



Since the Glover Report, local partners have funded the creation of 280 ha of new native broadleaved woodland in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Woodland Restoration - Fingle Wood Dartmoor
© David Rickwood - Woodland Trust

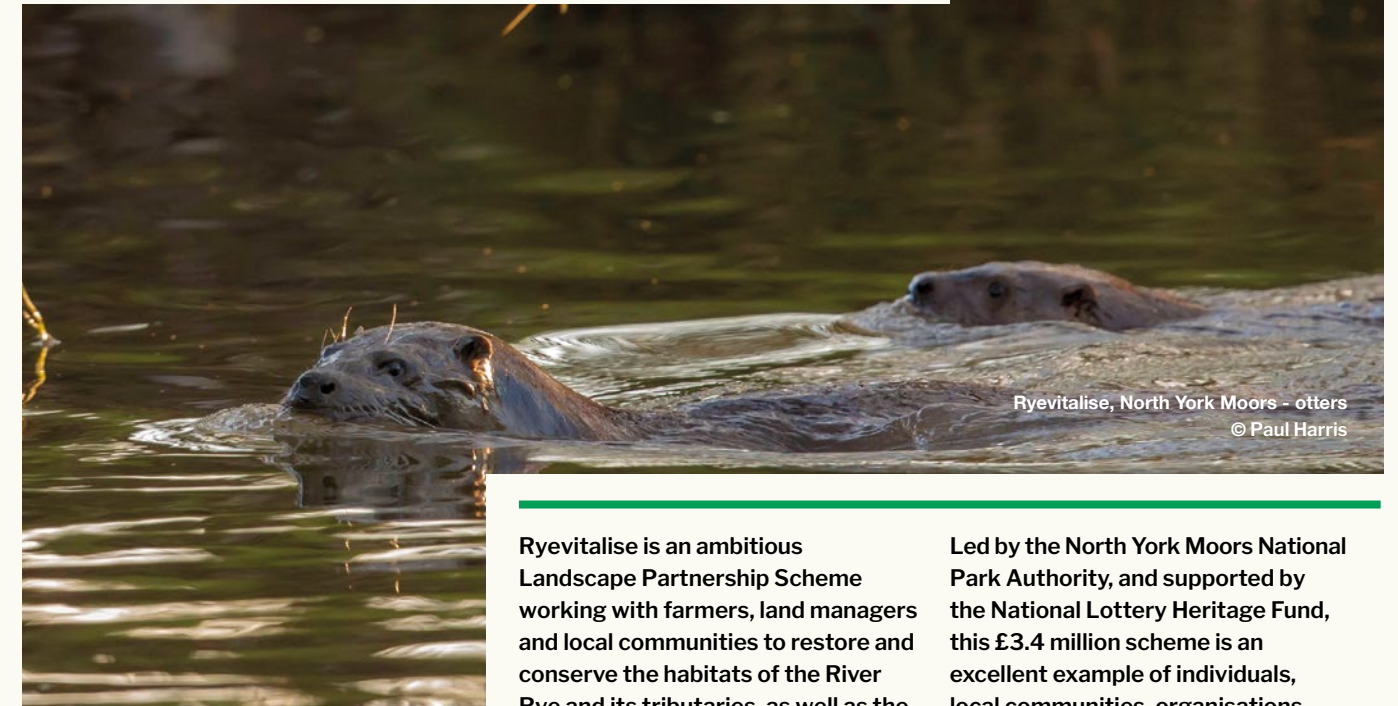
Nature Recovery Networks

Our achievements

We own just 10% of the land we operate in so we regularly work with farmers, landowners, the community and other bodies across the entirety of the National Parks. Our collective expertise includes ecologists, planners environmental scientists and rangers. This means we can work across boundaries and draw on experience from across the range of stakeholders involved in nature recovery.

As mentioned previously, as part of this collaborative work, National Parks England (NPE) released a Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks in December 2020, highlighting key actions that – with the right funding and policy support – would be taken to transform nature's recovery in the National Parks over the next 10 years, including the restoration of over 92,500 ha of land

where wildlife has a home. Our more detailed Prospectus for Nature Recovery, developed for each National Park, includes key priorities and partnerships, and costings for projects. Working with stakeholders, these show individual costs of delivering the key priorities per National Park and collectively.



Ryevitalise, North York Moors – otters
© Paul Harris

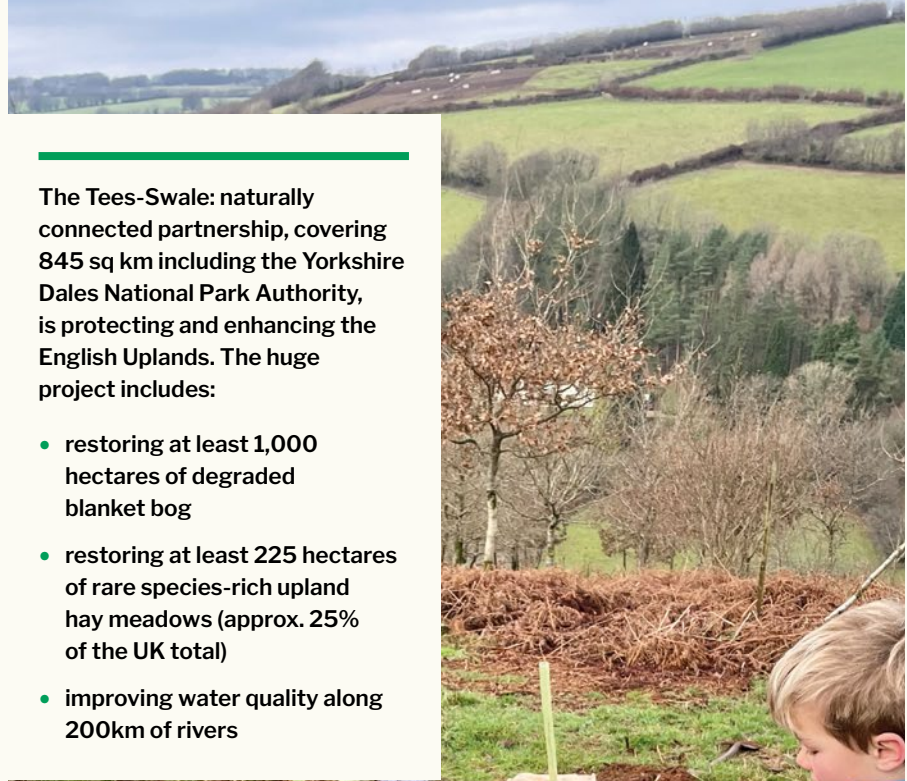
Ryevitalise is an ambitious Landscape Partnership Scheme working with farmers, land managers and local communities to restore and conserve the habitats of the River Rye and its tributaries, as well as the threatened species it supports.

Covering 160 square miles, the Ryevitalise project area follows the River Rye through the North York Moors National Park, the Howardian Hills AONB, and the farmlands of the Vale of Pickering.

Led by the North York Moors National Park Authority, and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this £3.4 million scheme is an excellent example of individuals, local communities, organisations and academics collaborating to deliver large scale nature recovery.

By re-establishing a more natural river, increasing biodiversity and educating the next generation of river guardians, we are driving forward a progressive programme of conservation projects.

Landscape scale collaboration for nature recovery is already starting to happen across the NPA-AONB network. The North Pennines AONB Partnership and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority are working together to deliver the £8.5 million **Tees-Swale: naturally connected**. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the programme is working with hundreds of High Nature Value farmers to create the most biodiverse landscape in the English uplands.



The Tees-Swale: naturally connected partnership, covering 845 sq km including the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, is protecting and enhancing the English Uplands. The huge project includes:

- restoring at least 1,000 hectares of degraded blanket bog
- restoring at least 225 hectares of rare species-rich upland hay meadows (approx. 25% of the UK total)
- improving water quality along 200km of rivers

Exmoor National Park Authority have begun the creation of a major new woodland on its land near Winsford. Named 'Bye Wood', it forms part of a drive to increase tree cover across Exmoor from 13.5% to at least 17% by 2050 – the amount recommended by the UK government's independent Climate Change Committee. Working with local partners and trusts, it is one of the biggest woodland creation projects to have taken place in the National Park in the past 15 years.



Bye Wood, Exmoor National Park
© Exmoor National Park Authority

Our future aspirations

We are continuing to build on the great collaborative efforts that have been underway for many years under protected landscapes. A strategic Nature Recovery Network is being established, with National Park Authorities (NPAs) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) a central component of this. Together, the national park and AONB partners have set out an ambitious plan for future working with landowners, farmers, partners and stakeholders, forming the backbone of the national Nature

Recovery Network. This also includes a clear description of the estimated costs for recovery and management of our habitats, so we understand the scale and efforts needed to make a difference.

With our collaborative working across boundaries these, and other projects, will mean we can continue to spread and scale the learnings across all protected landscapes. With proper investment and bespoke policy, National Parks are primed to protect our landscapes even more for future generations.

The South Downs, Britain's newest National Park and the third biggest in England, currently has 25 per cent of the land managed for nature, such as nature reserves, woods, heaths, ponds and flower-rich road verges. The additional 13,000 hectares from the #ReNature campaign aims to:

- create an extra 13,000 hectares – or around 21,000 football pitches – of habitat where plants and animals can thrive
- bring land managed for nature up to 33 per cent of land – going beyond current UN-backed conservation targets of “30 per cent by 2030” (30 by 30)



Identifying Aquatic Organisms, Sutton Bank
© North York Moors National Park Authority

SECTION 4

Sustainable Farming and Land Management



Our achievements

National Parks in England are living, working landscapes. Across England, we work with farmers, land managers and many other partners to help deliver a wide range of public goods. It is vital that, as part of that relationship, farmers receive a sustainable and realistic income, and are enabled to:

- support nature recovery;
- mitigate the effects of climate change;
- conserve and enhance the landscape and heritage; and
- provide ways to help everyone discover and enjoy our landscapes.

Farmers and other land managers play a vital role in shaping the landscapes they operate within to enhance the natural and cultural heritage, improve productivity, and create more vibrant, sustainable communities.

As national parks, our partnerships with farmers and land managers means we have the ability to care for the special qualities of our landscapes to deliver wider public good in an integrated way. This includes:

- clean and plentiful water
- clean air
- thriving plants and wildlife
- adaptation/mitigation of climate change
- reduction/protection from flooding
- beauty, heritage, access and engagement

The Landscapes Review recognises the importance of shared working. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Park Authorities (NPAs) have a long history of regional, landscape-scale, and thematic collaboration to address the challenges of nature recovery, climate change and engaging with the public. This has been amplified in the context of Land Management Schemes, such as woodland management programmes and initiatives such as the Northern Upland Local Nature Partnership.

The Northern Upland Local Nature Partnership (see also our section Nature Recovery) is a long-established collaborative endeavour operating across administrative and designation boundaries to drive nature recovery in the uplands. Involving two NPAs and three AONBs, its reach extends to over 1 million hectares of land.



Better Boundaries
© New Forest National Park Authority



Workers harvesting crops near Elsted
© Mischa Haller - South Downs National Park Authority

A national upland pilot for a 'results-based' agri-environment payment scheme has been established. This work has been taken forward on behalf of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, under the overall management of Natural England. The pilot has been running for 5 years and is focused on 19 farms in Wensleydale. It uses an outcome-focused approach that pays by results and places trust and responsibility in the hands of the farmer to decide how best to reach the desired conservation objectives.

The South Downs National Park has been shaped by its farming, and has taken part in Test and Trials (T&Ts) to feed into the development of land management schemes. Since 2014, the National Park Authority has been working with farmers on landscape-scale conservation through its innovative farmer-led Farm Cluster initiative. The six farm clusters now cover two-thirds of the National Park establishing its own shared objectives based on the priorities in their area - for example, focusing on increasing farmland birds, harvest mice or Duke of Burgundy butterflies. A key part of

their function is to explain the vital work that farmers undertake to enhance the landscape and biodiversity. The Authority has been working closely with farm clusters to increase and broaden engagement with those living in and visiting the National Park. This includes the launch of a dedicated website and open farm days to experience first-hand how farming and nature conservation can work together. Nationally, other National Park Authority led T&Ts have also been feeding into the process with Defra, enabling land managers to directly influence how land management payment schemes develop.

Close partnerships enable AONBs and NPAs to initiate and respond confidently, and at pace, to new opportunities for collaboration. For example, together we have developed the concept and structures for the **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FIPL)**, part of Defra's **Agricultural Transition Plan**. This, and other examples, demonstrate how the collective knowledge and experience of AONBs and National Park teams can deliver efficient and effective priority programmes and outcomes. This role as place-shapers enables us to deliver wider public benefits, such as clean water and thriving wildlife, as part of the wider rural economy.

The FiPL programme will provide funding for one-off projects which allow farmers and land managers in protected landscapes to:

- support nature recovery – such as increasing habitats to improve biodiversity or greater connectivity between habitats
- mitigate the impacts of climate change – such as reducing flood risk or storing more carbon
- provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
- support nature-friendly and sustainable farm businesses

The **New Forest Land Advice Service** offers support and advice to farmers, commoners and other people who undertake land management activities, facilitating nature conservation enhancements and best practice land management. Working with partners including the Wildlife Trust, the Verderers of the New Forest and Freshwater Habitats Trust, they are a vital link, providing regular communications through newsletters, keeping them up to date with policy changes and important issues around this period of agricultural transition. Test and trials of the ELMS programme have been co-designed and carried out here, and the FiPL programme is being delivered by this service. Going forward, the service will develop to support people through the whole process when they apply for FiPL funding.



Between 2013 and 2020 the percentage of Utilised Agricultural Area across Northumberland National Park that was in an agri-environment scheme exceeded 95%, on some years reaching 100%, a figure that reflected the park-wide engagement that the Farming Officers were able to achieve.

The Northern Upland Local Nature Partnership supports over 1m hectares of land for nature recovery.

Hill Top Farm in Malham is within the Yorkshire Dales National Park and is a good example of utilising sustainable farming methods. The Malhamdale landscape provides a way to use traditional methods of farming, utilising the Limestone uplands with most land being between 1200 – 1800ft. Hardy native breeds of cattle, the Belted Galloway, graze the land, and have evolved to cope with the weather

and marginal grassland of the hills, without the use of any grain-based feeding. These are part of conservation grazing schemes, with their presence proving crucial to improving biodiversity and natural habitat. Sustainable ways of farming mean the special landscape can flourish and enjoy protection, including a marked increase in natural flora and herbs and nesting barn owls.

Losing 5% of UK Peatland carbon would be equivalent to the UKs entire annual greenhouse gas emissions.

Boundary features of farms such as hedgerows, ditches and banks are important to local wildlife and biodiversity, and contribute to the character of farmland. The way land is managed is also vital to how we manage and prevent flooding, an issue which will become even more pronounced with climate change. Peat, for example, locks up 3 billion tonnes of carbon in UK, supports scarce and diverse animal,

insect and plant species and is an important wetland habitat.

Working in partnership with local land managers, including farmers and commoners, national parks understand the importance of the link between how land is managed, and how we can help to provide a more sustainable future. Restoration projects are therefore vital to increasing the biodiversity of our protected landscapes.

The New Forest Land Advice Service has established the **Better Boundaries** project, working with 22 landowners to restore, enhance or create 4km of boundary features in the west of the Forest. Hedge laying and hedge planting has improved the features of this area, creating new habitat corridors and better opportunities for wildlife to thrive, including an increase in bats, which now commute and forage along a new hedge connected to existing hedges.

Peat is an important store for carbon, but dry peat erodes away easily and is a source of greenhouse gas. The Broads Authority contains a nationally significant peat stock, first assessed in 1987 as part of a 'Lowland Peatland Survey in England and Wales'. They are working with farmers and land managers to overcome complex barriers to peatland restoration. This includes changing attitudes to peat restoration by demonstrating practical solutions for new peatland economics. Building on existing work with farmers to develop new farming practices that are not only sustainable but also economically productive, these initiatives include:

- a demonstration of wet farming (paludiculture) at Horsey
- raising awareness of possible changes to land use for carbon storage and reducing emissions

- Government schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods such as carbon storage, clean air and water, flooding protection and biodiversity

This partnership work helps secure the resources for farmers and land managers to work with the Broads Authority to improve the quality of landscapes, biodiversity and protect carbon in peat soils. Attracting investment into the Broads will help develop new economies and new methods of conservation.

75% of the remaining species-rich peat fen in lowland Britain is found in the Broads.



Building an otter holt in Dartmoor National Park
© Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Dartmoor Headwaters Natural Flood Management (NFM) project is a partnership between Dartmoor National Park Authority and the Environment Agency. Working with landowners and commoners, they deliver solutions in the upper catchment, slowing the flow of water and reducing the risk of flooding to downstream communities. The work includes:

- planting trees, storing water, improving wetland habitats to hold more water and enhance biodiversity
- blocking gullies using a variety of different leaky dams
- reconnecting rivers with their floodplain and restoring river corridor habitats to benefit flooding

Throughout this work, Dartmoor National Park have provided capital grants to landowners and encouraged them to carry out the work themselves wherever possible, boosting the local economy, fuelling greater interest in the concepts, and fostering a sense of ownership. Of particular note is the appointment of a group of commoners as contractors to successfully carry out work on the inaccessible high moor. Their local knowledge and practical skills were invaluable.

In Northumberland National Park, a core group of farmers from within the Coquetdale and Breamish farm network group were keen to be further involved in the development of the policy that will shape upland farms in the future. The group approached the Authority as a trusted facilitator to develop a Defra funded Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) Test and Trial (T&T), the outcome of which would help influence future policy in the uplands. The Authority facilitated this group, alongside colleagues at Natural England and Newcastle University and it was really important that the land managers were driving the agenda and thus the T&T developed and changed accordingly.

Since 2019, Northumberland National Park Authority has been working with the Rural Payments Agency, Natural England and Historic England to facilitate growth in the local rural economy, facilitating £2 million in funding from the Countryside Stewardship scheme to restore historic farm buildings across the National Park. This includes the restoration of historic farm buildings built before 1940 to a working condition so they can be used for agricultural purposes. Traditional materials such as lime mortar are used, maintaining the character of these buildings. It also supports traditional construction skills including masonry, joinery and ironmongery. Key outcomes include:

- 21 farms taking part, restoring buildings such as the early 19th century planned farmstead at Ingram in the Breamish Valley



Arklid Barn, Nibthwaite after repair
© Keith Hodgson

- A Victorian Shooting Lodge, a 17th century bastle and an isolated farmstead in the country north of Hadrian's Wall have been restored
- By the end of the pilot scheme, the project will have brought in significant economic benefits to the region, delivered by locally based accredited Conservation Architects and building contractors and sourcing materials locally where possible
- Early indicators suggest that for every pound invested, there is an output of between £1.65 and £2.50 for the local economy

Each project had a wildlife consultant working with the construction team, ensuring that wildlife was protected and spaces provided for nature to thrive.

The Lake District National Park Authority Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) team have worked with a young farming couple to develop a FiPL funded project to restore, adapt, and repurpose an historic traditional stone barn on the farm for use as a self-contained education facility. This will be used with farmers, landowners and land managers interested in learning about and adopting more nature positive farming methods and systems. This project will contribute to the delivery of the ambitions and priorities of the Lake District National Park Partnership's Management Plan for the National Park, in particular Farming led Nature Recovery and farm business adaptation to the Agricultural Transition.



Tree planting at Bilsdale, North York Moors
© Valerie Mather

The test and trials have included running and assessing models of local governance. The results of facilitated collaboration – bringing farmers together across ownership boundaries across the country – has been seen as a very positive development. This is evidenced by the work of Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) and the growing number of farmers clusters becoming established. CSF brings partners from Government, farming and the National Parks, to improve water and air quality in high priority areas, offering farmers free training, advice and support for grant applications. Further farmer collaboration such as this will be key to the delivery of ELMs in both the Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery tiers, and will ultimately increase the delivery of the objectives of the **25 year Environment Plan**.

Our future aspirations

All of England's National Park Authorities have been involved in Test and Trials to help inform Defra's development of the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. For example, Yorkshire Dales National Park and Natural England were pioneering payment by results, with a result-based agri-environment payment scheme (RBAPS) pilot which began in 2016, funded by the EU. In 2018 the pilot was extended for 2 more years with funding from Defra. To encourage co-design and appropriateness of the new scheme, tests and trials have been run for collaboration between farmers and land-managers. These are helping to design some of the fundamental building blocks of the post-Brexit agricultural policy, including how scheme participants plan and record which public goods they will deliver.

The Lake District Farming Officer worked closely with local farming and commons partner organisations to engage with farmers over the winter of 2020/2021 on the draft Lake District National Park Partnership's Plan 2021-2025. Over 100 farmers participated in meetings and surveys, and the results of this have been used by the partnership to shape the content of the plan, including shaping how they will receive business development advice and support, identifying their support needs for greater collaboration and identifying their appetite for farmer-led nature recovery and carbon auditing. This approach demonstrates our ability to work in partnership with farmers and land managers, delivering a sustainable approach to land management which benefits the public good in the future.

In Norfolk, a collaborative governance structure is already seeing the different farm cluster facilitators coming together to share ideas and knowledge. Stakeholder groups are getting behind the Norfolk & Suffolk 25 Year environment plan including the Norfolk & Suffolk Natural Capital Compendium, Norfolk Rural Strategy, Nature Recovery Network and Water Resources East's Systematic Conservation Planning

Our work across the National Park Authorities to help farmers and land owners engage with the FiPL programme shows how important partnership working and collaboration are to driving forward sustainable land management initiatives for the future. There is a strong commitment to boost farmer-led nature recovery and help farmers to engage with the FiPL programme.



Farm Conservation team talking to farmers at Thornton Rust, Wensleydale
© Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Special thanks to the following

Alison Barnes, New Forest National Park Authority; Lead Officer for Health and Wellbeing

Nina Beadle, North York Moors National Park Authority

Trevor Beattie, South Downs National Park Authority; Lead Officer for Education

Kevin Bishop, Dartmoor National Park Authority; Lead Officer for Sustainable Farming and Land Management

David Butterworth, National Parks England

Maria Court, New Forest National Park Authority

Alexandra Cripps, North York Moors National Park Authority

Lorna Fisher, Peak District National Park Authority

Sarah Fowler, formerly Peak District National Park Authority and Lead Officer for Nature Recovery

Briony Fox, North York Moors National Park Authority

Hoda Gray, National Parks England

Paul Hamblin, National Parks England

Sam Hill, Dartmoor National Park Authority

Ruth James, South Downs National Park Authority

Andrea Kelly, Broads Authority

Hanna Latty, Lake District National Park Authority

Richard Leafe, Lake District National Park Authority; Lead Officer for Climate Leadership

Harry Mach, Broads Authority

Andrew McCloy, National Parks England

Heather McNiff, North York Moors National Park Authority

Julia Melin-Stubbs, New Forest National Park Authority

Jim Mitchell, New Forest National Park Authority

Tim Nicholson, Peak District National Park Authority

Mandy Roberts, Northumberland National Park Authority

Orlando Rutter, Dartmoor National Park Authority

Adrian Shepherd, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Gary Smith, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Ailsa Stevens, Exmoor National Park Authority

Ben Totterdell, Dartmoor National Park Authority

Sarah Wilks, Peak District National Park Authority

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Looking ahead towards Seven Sisters
© Sam Moore - South Downs National Park Authority



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