

7. **NATIONAL PARKS ENGLAND DELIVERY PLAN FOR WILDLIFE IN NATIONAL PARKS – A PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK UPDATE (SLF)**

1. **Purpose of the report**

To inform Members about National Parks England's Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks, what this means for the Peak District National Park and how it fits with our National Park Management Plan and the review currently taking place.

Key Issues

- The Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks has been devised by National Parks England (NPE) and the ten English National Park Authorities to drive action in nature recovery in response to the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- The Authority will deliver its commitments to the Delivery Plan through our Corporate Strategy and National Park Management Plan (NPMP). Both include commitments for the Authority, alongside our partners, for an enhanced diverse, working and cherished landscape which enhances the special qualities, in particular by ensuring a future for farming and land management and working at an even bigger landscape scale.
- The Delivery Plan is part of our evidence base for the current review of the NPMP and Corporate Strategy.
- There is significant interest in and publicity about the need for nature recovery and the prevention and mitigation of climate change (e.g. natural solutions to carbon sequestration and flood risk mitigation). A variety of terms are in use e.g. rewilding, wilder, nature friendly, making space for nature and nature recovery and these terms can mean different things to different people. At the same time there is substantial interest and activity from a wide range of partners. So, the Authority has a convening role to bring all partners together to share existing data and to develop one Nature Recovery Plan for the Peak District National Park (PDNP).
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), a statutory requirement under the recently passed Environment Act will be developed and will support nature recovery. It is likely that the 'responsible authority' will be based at a county or unitary authority level so potentially split six ways for the PDNP. However, ultimately it will be the Secretary of State who decides who the responsible body will be. The Authority is working towards one Nature Recovery Plan for the PDNP which could stand on its own as a Local Nature Recovery Strategy or be split in different ways e.g. County, National Park, National Character Areas.

2. **Recommendations(s)**

1. **To note how the Authority is currently taking forward National Parks England's Delivery Plan for Wildlife in the PDNP and how it is informing our future NPMP.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. **The UK Government Vision and Circular for National Parks (2010)**

The vision for English National Parks and the Broads includes that by 2030 they should be places where "wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable

adaptation”.

4. Nature recovery is central to National Park Authority objectives and the Delivery Plan for Wildlife will contribute in the following ways:
 - A Renewed Focus on Achieving the Park Purposes:
 - Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Parks
 - Leading the way in adapting to, and mitigating, climate change:
 - The Authorities have a role as exemplars of sustainability in enabling the natural environment to adapt to predicted changes (and being resilient to unpredictable events), in supporting the delivery of ecosystem services and in developing more resilient infrastructure (such as rights of way that are less vulnerable to flood damage).
 - The Parks themselves will be threatened by climate change and the Authorities must ensure that they protect the public assets which the Parks represent.
 - The Authorities should lead the way in sustainable land management to prevent further carbon loss from soils and to encourage carbon storage in trees and fens (including peatlands and other habitats such as semi-natural grasslands).
 - Secure a diverse and healthy natural environment, enhance cultural heritage and inspire lifelong behaviour change:
 - Manage landscape, heritage and improve quality of place
 - Biodiversity, valued, safeguarded and enhanced
 - Protecting and enhancing soils in our most valued landscapes
 - Promoting and delivering agri-environment schemes and food security
 - Improving public understanding of the natural environment and the benefits of outdoor recreation.
 - Promoting opportunities for people to experience the natural environment and seek to inspire a lifelong commitment to enjoying, understanding and caring for the natural environment.
5. **The National Park Management Plan.**

The Delivery Plan for Wildlife will be able to contribute to maintaining and enhancing all seven Special Qualities and in particular: Special Quality 1 - Beautiful views created by contrasting landscapes and dramatic geology, Special Quality 2 - Internationally important and locally distinctive wildlife and habitats, Special Quality 4 - Landscapes that tell a story of thousands of years of people, farming and industry, Special Quality 6 - An inspiring space for escape, adventure, discovery and quiet reflection and Special Quality 7 - Vital benefits for millions of people that flow beyond the landscape boundary.
6. It will also be able to contribute to Areas of impact: 1 – Preparing for a future climate, 2 - Ensuring a future for farming and land management, 3 - Managing landscape conservation on a big scale, 5 - Encouraging enjoyment with understanding and 6 - Supporting thriving and sustainable communities and economy.
7. Emerging findings from the initial NPMP review consultation has placed nature recovery as one of the top concerns from those who responded.
8. **The Corporate Strategy.**

The National Parks England’s Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks will be able to contribute to many of the outcomes and Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) in particular:

A sustainable landscape that is conserved and enhanced: -

 - Distinctive landscapes that are sustainably managed, accessible and

properly resourced - KPIs 1, 2 and 3.

- High quality habitats in better condition, better connected and wildlife rich through nature recovery networks – KPI's 4, 5, 6 and 7. By the end of 2020/21 the KPI 4 target for restoration activities on 600 hectares of degraded blanket bog has already been exceeded; the KPI 5 target of sustaining 5,000 hectares of non-protected species-rich grassland is being achieved; the KPI 6 target of 100 hectares of new native woodland being created is behind with only 36 hectares having been created but more sites in development; the KPI 7 to restore breeding pairs of birds of prey in the moorlands to at least the levels present in the late 1990's also remains behind target.

9. The Peak District Landscape Strategy.

The PDNP contains an amazing variety of landscapes shaped by variations in geology and landform and the long settlement and use of these landscapes by people. The Landscape Character Assessment shows how the landscapes of the National Park and its surrounding area has been divided into a series of Regional Character Areas representing broad tracts of landscape which share common characteristics. Within each Regional Character Area, a number of Landscape Character Types have been defined based upon the pattern of natural and cultural characteristics. The 2009 version establishes a baseline audit of the current character of the landscape and provides a framework for the measurement of future landscape change. The strategy is currently under review and will be brought forward for members consideration shortly. Please note that the proposed Wooded Landscape Plan which is also to be considered by Members at this meeting will form part of this strategy but has been developed in advance to help ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place for the right reason.

10. The Landscapes Review.

At the time of this report being sent to Members the Government's response to the recommendations of the Landscapes Review is still awaited although this is considered to be imminent.

Background Information

11. National Park England's Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks.

In December 2020 NPE published a suite of four interconnected Delivery Plans which set out how the parks will protect and enhance the natural environment, how they will become leaders in tackling the climate emergency, how they will support thriving communities where sustainable farming and land management deliver a wide range of public goods, and set out their vision to support the health and wellbeing of the whole nation. The Landscapes for Everyone Delivery Plan includes "Inspiring more people to care more about nature and National Parks".

12. The NPE's Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks is one of these four delivery plans and is shown at Appendix 1. The vision for nature recovery is:

13. "National Parks sit at the heart of the nation's nature recovery network; we are places where wildlife flourishes, habitats are maintained, restored, and expanded, and where everyone can experience nature and wildlife at their best. Strong local partnerships in each National Park will deliver 20% of the government's nature recovery target on 10% of the land, saving/sequestering 330,000 tonnes of CO2 per year".

14. The vision will be achieved by working together, and at scale, to transform nature's recovery in National Parks.

15. There is commitment to developing a nature recovery programme for National Parks

that:

- Identifies zones to deliver concentrated habitat enhancement and improved functionality
- Prioritises species to be safeguarded and re-introduced
- Increases tree cover and restores peatlands, grasslands, heathlands and other habitats, with the principle of right habitat, right place, right reason
- Provides nature-based solutions to climate change resilience
- Restores soil structure and health to improve function (carbon storage and water management)
- Implements long-term invasive non-native species control programmes
- Establishes buffer zones and green and blue infrastructure corridors linking National Landscapes, National and Community Forests, and urban areas to create a genuine national network where everyone can access and experience nature and wildlife at their best.

16. There is commitment to working through our strong local partnerships, to co-create the plans with farmers, landowners and communities. So, we achieve sustainable change that supports the community in their role as custodians and identifies investment in nature recovery to help support viable farm businesses. These nature recovery programmes will form the backbone of our future NPMPs.

17. National Park Nature Recovery Prospectuses.

As a first step following on from the completion of the Delivery Plan for Wildlife a Nature Recovery Prospectus for each National Park was developed with funding support from Natural England. The prospectus is seen as a high-level initial step to help influence government and as a starting point for further discussions with partners and other key stakeholders. The PDNP Nature Recovery Prospectus is the subject to a separate report to this committee.

18. National Parks England Wildlife Delivery Business Plan.

The next step under the NPE Wildlife Delivery Plan is to develop and promote a business plan which capitalises on the opportunities and overcomes the barriers to delivery. This will use the powerful story and ambition that the English National Parks have to form the backbone of nature recovery in England. The vision is for National Parks to be national beacons for a sustainable future, where nature and people flourish.

19. Existing environmental protection and land ownership.

Only 33% of the national park is protected by designations (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation). The English National Park model is that they are privately owned and whilst this Authority does own about 5% of the land in this National Park the remaining 95% is privately owned. Environmental Non-Government Organisations (eNGOs) such as the National Trust, which owns approximately 12% of the National Park, do have generally aligned nature recovery ambitions to the Authority. However, a high proportion of this land is already designated. To deliver nature recovery the work already done to improve our most important SSSI sites will need to be built on by improving the protection and management of those high-quality sites that do not have statutory protection; increasing the number and area of high-quality habitats; and encouraging measures in the wider landscape to make more intensively managed landscapes more wildlife-friendly.

20. The need for the delivery of integrated and balanced public goods to be properly rewarded.

As already identified in the current NPMP and Corporate Strategy the delivery of public goods does need to be properly rewarded and for the moment the mainstream funding for this is national agri-environment schemes.

21. The 25 Year Environment Plan and the more recent Agricultural Transition Plan set out the Government's intentions to revolutionise the support system for farming and land management by looking to reward the delivery of public goods. Nature recovery will deliver for all six public goods albeit to a varying degree: thriving plants and wildlife; adaptation to and mitigation of climate change; reduction in and protection from environmental hazards; beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment; clean and plentiful water; and clean air.
22. The PDNP landscape does provides opportunities for farmers and land managers to diversify their income streams such as providing educational access, camping sites etc, subject to any required consents. Delivery of nature recovery will provide further opportunities for diversification and for the wider rural economy but this is within the context of a changing support system.
23. The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) which in essence pays farmers and land managers for the area of land they manage will be phased out over a seven-year period ending in 2027. Current agri-environment schemes will also be phased out and replaced with the proposed Environmental Land Management (ELM) approach from 2024 onwards. ELM will consist of three schemes Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. These schemes will need to properly reward and incentivise farmers and land managers for the public goods they deliver if nature recovery is to be secured. ELM is due to start at the end of 2024, and in the meantime, in protected landscapes, landowners are being encouraged to transition to farming that delivers more public goods (including wildlife) through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
24. Other sources of funding particularly through the private sector will increasingly provide more funding opportunities. However, exactly how public and private funds will be blended and work in a complimentary way rather than in competition and without duplication or double funding is yet to be fully worked through and agreed.
25. **Local Nature Recovery Strategies**

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will soon be produced to cover the entirety of England with no gaps or overlaps. There are two main outcomes of these LNRS's, the first being a set of maps which indicate areas of high nature value with areas which present opportunities to create/expand these habitats, the second being accompanying descriptions of these sites with a statement of biodiversity priorities within the strategy area.
26. Five pilot schemes for LNRS's were completed earlier this year, one of these schemes was Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The goal of these pilots was to determine a best practice and identify obstacles to the anticipated nationwide roll out of LNRS's following the passing of the upcoming Environment Bill. The Park collaborated with GMCC during the process of preparing the pilot LNRS and is in a position to continue working together on our own Nature Recovery Plan. The key findings of these pilot schemes included:
 - Early collaboration with partners and relevant stakeholders which is to be maintained throughout the process with a high level of transparency (this has already begun with the PDNP Nature Recovery Plan)
 - Good and accessible data is essential to the preparation of LNRS's

- Consistencies across boundaries are to be prioritised
- A delivery plan/framework within the strategy is sought by some stakeholders

27. The Environment Bill became an Act on the 9 November 2021 and gives the Secretary of State the power to determine what area each LNRS should cover and to appoint a 'responsible authority' to lead its production and publication. It may be that the PDNP itself is not designated as a responsible authority for the production of a LNRS and this will instead be split across six separate responsible authorities (County Councils/Unitary Authorities) which presents the risk of six disjointed LNRS's being applied within the National Park boundaries. To pre-empt this, work on a plan for the PDNP as a whole has been commenced with close collaboration with County Council's etc to be a key component. Building consensus and ultimately delivering a more cohesive plan for nature recovery within the PDNP and extending beyond its boundaries. Nature recovery within the PDNP should be ambitious in relation to other LNRS's, as the nature recovery delivery plan envisages achieving 20% of national nature recovery goals within National Parks, making up 10% of the land. National Parks England has responded to the government's recent LNRS consultation.

Proposals

28. As Programmes and Resources Committee Members will be aware from the report in October 2021 it has been agreed that the progress towards delivery of the four NPE Delivery Plans will be overseen by this committee. The Authority is already undertaking many activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in meeting the nature recovery ambitions.

29. The summary below updates Members on the key wildlife and nature recovery related activities we are focussing our resources on:

30. Influencing

- The work of the Authority's Officers at national stakeholder meetings representing both the English National Park Authorities and the PDNPA.
- Delivering one of the ELM Tests and Trials and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme for Defra. Learnings from both will feed into the design of the ELM schemes.
- Existing Landscape scale partnerships – Moors for the Future, South West Peak Landscape and the White Peak Partnerships.
- Peak District Land Manager's Forum which brings a representative range of farmers, land managers, land owners and organisations together to consider issues and opportunities.
- Moorland Management Group which is working on five key topics – resilient sustainable moorland, visitor engagement, fire risk, moorland birds, rural and wildlife crime.
- The review of the Landscape Strategy together with the Wooded Landscape element of the strategy.
- The Authority's own land demonstrates environmental land management.

31. Delivering

- The work of the Authority's farm advisers with farmers and land managers brokering the national agri-environment schemes and the Authority's own small-scale Land Management Grant scheme.
- Existing Landscape scale partnerships – Moors for the Future, South West Peak Landscape Partnership and the White Peak Partnership.
- A range of smaller-scale projects such as the invasive species project.
- Completion of the Environmental Land Management Test and Trial for Defra and the continuing small-scale White Peak practical field trials.

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme which is delivering under the four themes of climate, nature, people and place.
- The proposed Woodland Trust Partnership extending and growing the arrangements for small-scale woodland creation using Nature for Climate funds. Please note it is proposed to bring a report to Members in January 2022.
- The Authority's own land is also one of the key delivery mechanisms for nature recovery. (Also delivers through influencing).

32. Regulatory

- Regulatory work including planning (including Biodiversity Net Gain),
- Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations advice and support.
- Land management consultations e.g. for felling Licences, Section 156 disposals (sale or lease of Water Company land).

33. Partners also continue to deliver in a wide range of ways for nature recovery for example:

- Sheffield Moors Landscape Partnership.
- Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership led by Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust with a range of complimentary projects.,
- Derwent Catchment Partnership
- The Ravine Woodland Project - a partnership project led by Natural England to mitigate the impacts of Ash Dieback on the internationally designated Ash woodlands of the Peak District dales.
- NE is working towards a greater understanding of how Biodiversity Net Gain can be used to deliver our collective ambitions for nature recovery on the White Peak plateau. They are also working with Severn Trent Water (STW) on specific projects where STW is providing funding for Nature Recovery.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

34. Current activities led by the Authority as described above are funded but progress will need to be kept under review particularly as the continuation of programmes and projects increasingly rely on full cost recovery which is not always available from key funders e.g. National Lottery Heritage Fund. So, further or reallocated resources may be required for priority nature recovery activities and delivery mechanisms.

35. An assessment of the Rural Development Programme total annual funding coming in to the PDNP in 2014/15, when the coverage of land in agri-environment schemes was at its highest (87%), amounted to £30 Million. This figure includes BPS (approximately 66 %), agri-environment schemes and other funding for productivity and diversification on farms. Current estimates of the cost of nature recovery in line with the Nature Recovery Prospectus indicate that at least £30 Million a year will be needed to deliver nature recovery in the PDNP. Continuity and further provision of local bespoke advice and guidance through trusted advisers will also be required.

Risk Management:

36. The greatest risk is if farmers and land managers, who own the majority of the PDNP, do not engage with and deliver nature recovery. If future ELM schemes do not sufficiently reward farmers and land managers for the public goods they deliver, there is unlikely to be sufficient uptake to deliver nature recovery. Whilst the public purse, through national environmental schemes, is currently the mainstream source of funding for nature recovery in the medium to longer term private sector funding and Biodiversity Net Gain are likely to play an increasingly significant role and may be able to offer greater incentives.

37. Continuing uncertainty about the future detail of and level of payments for ELM coupled with the growing impact of the BPS reductions will result in farm and land management businesses seeking ways to remain resilient and sustainable. Some land managers may choose or feel they have no option but to try and replace lost BPS payments through increasing agricultural production e.g. increasing stock numbers or through diversification. Whilst such changes could be positive they may also have associated negative landscape, environmental and biodiversity impacts. Influencing ELM design, ELM payment levels and how public and private funds will be blended together in a way which delivers nature recovery remains key.
38. There is also a risk that all partners may not engage but to date there does seem to be a collective will to develop one Nature Recovery Plan for the Peak District. Whilst this is being developed the Authority and partners will continue to deliver their programmes and projects for nature recovery.

Sustainability:

39. Our work on wildlife and nature recovery directly improves the sustainability of the Peak District landscape

Equality:

40. There are no direct implications for equalities in the activities contained within this report

41. Climate Change

1. How does this decision contribute to the Authority's role in climate change set out in the UK Government Vision and Circular for National Parks?
 - a. **Educators in climate change**

Delivering to NPE's Wildlife in National Parks Delivery Plan will help enable the Authority to be educators in climate change through the maintenance, enhancement, restoration, expansion and increased connectivity of its habitats.
 - b. **Exemplars of sustainability**

Delivering to NPE's Wildlife in National Parks Delivery Plan will enable the Authority to demonstrate how nature recovery can lie at the very heart of developing a strong economy and sustaining thriving local communities
 - c. **Protecting the National Park**

Delivering to NPE's Wildlife in National Parks Delivery Plan will help enable the Authority to protect the special qualities of the National Park in particular special quality 2: Internationally important and locally distinctive wildlife and habitats.
 - d. **Leading the way in sustainable land management**

Delivering to NPE's Wildlife in National Parks Delivery Plan will help enable the Authority to lead the way in sustainable land management.
 - e. **Exemplars in renewable energy**

Delivering to NPE's Wildlife in National Parks Delivery Plan will help ensure that proposals for renewable energy are not at the expense of other special qualities such as biodiversity and cultural heritage.
 - f. **Working with communities**

Delivering to NPE's Wildlife in National Parks Delivery Plan will involve the Authority working with communities and in particular the farming and land management community.
2. How does this decision contribute to the Authority meeting its carbon net zero target?

Land management for nature recovery will have positive carbon emissions, sequestration and carbon storage in soils and vegetation implications for the land in its ownership. The Authority may wish to take this into consideration in its own carbon net zero assessments.

3. How does this decision contribute to the National Park meeting carbon net zero by 2050?
Land management for nature recovery will have positive carbon emissions, sequestration and carbon storage in soils and vegetation implications across the PDNP.
4. Are there any other Climate Change related issues that are relevant to this decision that should be brought to the attention of Members?
The need for a more sustainable approach to transport in and across the National Park in terms of the impact of vehicles in terms of carbon emissions and on the fabric of the landscape.

42. Background papers (not previously published)

None.

43. Appendices

Appendix 1 - National Parks England Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks.

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Suzanne Fletcher, Head of Landscape, 24 November 2021