

## 6. **LANDSCAPE AND NATURE RECOVERY AIM OVERVIEW**

### 1. **Purpose of the report**

To inform Members about the Authority's progress in landscape and nature recovery since April 2023 and what this means for the future.

#### **Key Issues**

- This report is the landscape and nature recovery theme update report in the Programmes and Resources Committee programme for 2023/24. This follows the climate change update report considered by Members in September 2023.
- The National Park Management Plan vision includes the Peak District National Park (PDNP) being exemplary in its response to nature recovery and that its special qualities and resilience as a living landscape should be significantly enhanced.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 set out the framework and vision for what the Government wants to do to improve the environment within a generation. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 revises the original plan and sets out the plan to deliver the ten goals with the “apex” goal of thriving plants and wildlife. Specific Protected Landscape targets continue to be in development.
- Further announcements about nature recovery, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes, Biodiversity Net Gain becoming mandatory for certain developments from January 2024, changes to Nutrient Neutrality and new approaches to blend private and public sector funding for nature recovery have been made. More “players” continue to get involved with nature recovery and to seek ways of attracting private as well as public funds.
- The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan has been developed with constituent Local Authorities and key partners and will complement and contribute to the six future county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Once completed the Nature Recovery Plan will sit as part of the NPMP and the revised Local Plan. The final draft will be presented for Member consideration in March 2024.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has been extremely successful nationally and in the PDNP resulting in additional funding and a fourth year of the programme for 2024/2025 being announced as part of the EIP 2023. Please also see the key findings from the interim evaluation - [Farming in Protected Landscapes: interim evaluation findings - Farming \(blog.gov.uk\)](#). The popularity of the programme, the importance of the local adviser, local flexibility and bespoke projects along with the value of the Local Assessment Panels are all highlighted. The vast majority of the 304 approved projects deliver for nature and/or landscape.
- The Authority has also been commissioned by Defra to deliver a further ELM Test and Trial on the role of National Park Authorities as local convenor and in local delivery on behalf of the English National Park Authorities.
- Since the April 2023 Programmes and Resources meeting the Authority has undertaken many activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in meeting our landscape and nature recovery ambitions. These are outlined at paragraph 6 below the majority of which will continue to be delivered and developed through 2024-25 together with additional actions detailed in the Authority Plan 2023-28.

## 2. Recommendation

### 1. To note progress in delivering to the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and Authority Plan landscape and nature recovery aim and targets.

#### How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The activities described in this report contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:
- The 30 by 30 target through which the Government has agreed to conserve (protect) 30% of land by 2030.
  - All seven of the [special qualities](#), Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#), Aim Three [Welcoming Place](#), Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the National Park Management Plan particularly for Aims One and Two; and the [Authority Plan](#) Aims One, Two, Three and Four actions.
  - The Landscape Strategy 2023 was approved by Members at the Authority meeting in December 2022. It describes what is special about the Peak District landscapes, sets out the issues affecting the landscape and provides management guidelines to address the issues, conserve and enhance the landscape (minute reference 99/22).
  - The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan has been developed with constituent Local Authorities and key partners and will complement and contribute to the six statutory county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies being developed by County Councils/Combined Authorities. The final draft will be presented for Member consideration in March 2024. Once completed the Nature Recovery Plan will sit as part of the NPMP and the revised Local Plan.

#### Background Information

4. Members agreed at the 22 July 2022 Authority meeting to align the programmes for Programmes and Resources to the National Park Management Plan 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). The same paper also agreed that landscape and nature recovery would be the second aim reported to Programmes and Resources. This paper fulfils that commitment.

#### Proposals

5. As Programmes and Resources will be aware from the reports to this Committee in April 2023 the Authority is already undertaking many activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in delivering our landscape and nature recovery ambitions. The summary below updates Members on the activities we have focussed our resources on since April 2023 and look to continue and develop.
6. Influencing
- The work of the Authority's Officers at national stakeholder meetings representing both the English National Park Authorities and the PDNPA.
  - The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan will be used to influence the development and complement the six future county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).
  - Policy & Communities, Land & Nature and Planning officers have been working together to review the implications of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Current indications are that this is likely to apply to a limited number of planning applications in the Peak District, but the application of proportionate BNG to all development proposals, through existing Local Plan policy, is also being addressed. A technical Advice Note is being developed to include guidance on the siting and nature of BNG; off-site opportunities; assessing the adequacy of proposed BNG; mechanisms to ensure long-term security; and Biodiversity Credits.

- Delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme for Defra, learnings from which and in particular from the Interim Evaluation report are feeding in to the design of the ELM schemes. The future of FiPL is also being considered by Defra.
- The learnings from the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Historic Buildings Pilot within 5 National Parks including the PDNP which ended in December 2022 were summarised and published in October 2023. The learnings are being considered in the further development of the ELM schemes. In October 2023 Defra announced an additional £5 million for Historic Building restoration projects across all Protected Landscapes. This recognises the success of the Pilot, the importance of historic buildings in protected landscapes and for farmers and land managers.
- Existing Landscape scale partnerships – Moors for the Future, the evolving Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Pilot building on the successful partnership working of the South West Peak Landscape Partnership.
- Peak District Land Manager’s Forum (representative range of farmers, land managers, land owners and organisations) met in October 2023 to visit practical examples of delivering nature recovery.
- Moorland Management Group has continued to work on five key topics – resilient sustainable moorland, visitor engagement, fire risk, moorland birds and rural and wildlife crime. The focus has been on fire prevention and mitigation of moorland fire however, progress has been slow until the results of Natural England’s peer review of the Pilot Project Wildfire Risk Assessment has been completed and shared. A refreshed approach is being explored for 2024/2025.
- The Birds of Prey Initiative has been reviewed and the Authority took the decision to close the initiative as after 11 years no greater progress than the national trends in terms of birds of prey population increases had been achieved. Officers continue to explore with partners alternative means of enhancing bird of prey populations and addressing wildlife crime.
- The Authority’s own land demonstrates environmental land management. In particular it is hoped that the Morridge Hill Country ELM Landscape Recovery Pilot Project currently in the second stage of the application process, the enrolment phase, will proceed to a two-year development phase which includes developing Pump Farm on the Warslow Moors Estate as a demonstration farm and nature recovery hub.
- The European Diploma for Protected Areas, which has been held by the PDNP since 1966, is due for renewal in 2024. The Diploma is awarded by the Council of Europe (CoE) in recognition of “natural and semi-natural areas and landscapes of exceptional European importance for the preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity and which are managed in an exemplary way.” There are currently 67 Diploma-holding areas throughout Europe, with just 4 others in the UK. Officers hosted a delegation from the CoE in 2023, in preparation for the renewal, and will be exploring whether we can use the award to greater effect. For more info about the Diploma see [European Diploma - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-diploma-for-protected-areas).

## 7. Delivering

- The work of the Authority’s farm advisers with farmers and land managers brokering national agri-environment schemes and supporting the delivery of FiPL has continued. Farm advisers completed and/or provided advice and support for

24 CS Mid-Tier applications, 3 CS Higher Tier applications (one NPA owned land) and 8 CS Capital Grant Scheme applications (one NPA owned land).

- Existing Landscape scale partnerships – Moors for the Future, South West Peak Landscape Partnership (through legacy projects) and the White Peak Partnership.
- Landscape Recovery Pilot projects -
  - Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Project – the application involving the Authority’s Warslow Moors Estate, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Ministry of Defence owned and managed land together with many of the tenant farmers was successful in the first stage of the application process. It is currently going through the enrolment phase before hopefully being offered a contract for a two-year development phase. This in turn will ultimately leading to a longer-term delivery phase with both public and private sector funding.
  - White Peak Landscape Recovery Project - whilst the application on behalf of farmers and land managers in the White Peak was unsuccessful further engagement and development is planned to explore other funding opportunities to help develop a sustainable farm business model to deliver nature recovery in the White Peak. The Authority’s land in the White Peak would also be involved as these high-quality environmental sites would act as refuges for wildlife and as seed sources for habitat restoration.
- A range of smaller-scale projects such as the invasive species project.
- The Authority has also been commissioned by Defra to deliver a further ELM Test and Trial on the role of National Park Authorities as local convenor and in local delivery on behalf of the English National Park Authorities. Please see Appendix 2 – Environmental Land Management Test and Trial Summary.
- FiPL has continued to deliver farmer and land manager projects under the four themes of climate, nature, people and place. Successful delivery of FiPL across all 44 protected landscapes has led to additional funding and an additional fourth year for the programme. Please see Appendix 3 for 2022/23 summary and Appendix 4 FiPL Project Examples.
- FiPL funding has been used to support nineteen projects involving traditional building with twelve already supporting protected species (bats and/or barn owl) and most buildings used by other bird species.
- A summary of the outputs from the CS Historic Building Restoration Pilot delivered within 5 National Parks including the PDNP was provided in the April 2023 update referred to above. Of the fifteen projects completed 9 support protected species and all buildings are used by other bird species. Following restoration there were new records for wildlife species, one for bats, one for house martin and one for both barn owl and bats.
- The Historic Building Restoration Grant (HBRG) funding is available during 2024/2025 with £4.5 million allocated to capital projects and £500,000 allocated as revenue funding to support developing, advising and managing approved projects. The HBRG will be administered through FiPL with funding awarded through a competitive application process and with a tight deadline of 31 March 2025 for delivery to project completion. The Authority is currently involved in one HBRG application which involves supporting a bat population.
- The Woodland Trust Partnership extending and growing the arrangements for small-scale woodland creation using Nature for Climate funds. Approximately 17 ha of woodland created to date with a further 40 ha in the pipeline.
- Authority owned land is also one of the key delivery mechanisms for landscape and nature recovery for example rewetting of a large proportion of moorland. Funding has recently been secured for the rewetting of a further 250 ha of moorland.
- - Landscape Enhancement Initiatives and undergrounding overhead electric wires projects.
  - Recently developed artificial intelligence interpretation (AI) of aerial photographs for land cover monitoring has produced the PDNP Land Cover 2023 Map. This data has already been used successfully in a number of areas such as

Landscape Recovery and Species Recovery Bids and will be integrated within the Peak District Nature Recovery Plan for 2024. We are continuing to develop this work making improvements and expanding our use of AI to monitoring boundary features in the White Peak Landscape.

8. Regulatory

- Regulatory work, notably planning, including developing the Authority's approach for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations advice and support.
- Land management consultations include 21 felling Licences, 3 England Woodland Creation Offers, 1 Hedgerow Regulations, 3 EA water discharge/abstraction/other works together with a range of informal consultations for projects such as the White Rose Forest, Sustainable Farming Incentive etc.

9. Partners also continue to deliver for landscape and nature recovery, often with input from Authority officers, for example:

- Sheffield Moors Landscape Partnership.
- Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT) have recently purchased Ughill Farm close to Bradfield with the aim to manage this with a nature recovery focus.
- Derwent, Dove and other Catchment Partnerships.
- The Natural England (NE) led partnership Ravine Woodland Project is mitigating the impacts of Ash Dieback on the internationally designated Ash woodlands of the Peak District dales.
- NE continues to work towards our collective ambitions for nature recovery in the White Peak primarily through initiatives delivered by Catchment Sensitive Farming projects and through the Peak District Dales Protected Sites Strategy Pilot. This builds on the White Peak Trials delivered in partnership with the PDNPA and Severn Trent Water
- The National Trust have renewed their vision for the Dark Peak Estate with a focus on nature recovery and have successfully applied for ELM Landscape Recovery funding from Defra. They are starting a similar process of vision development and tenant engagement in the White Peak. Both of these initiatives have been supported by a FiPL grant.
- Wild Peak project led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.
- Derwent Living Forest (kickstarted by Derwent Connections) led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
- Derbyshire Species Recovery Group, and various species or habitat specific groups, e.g. woodland, water vole, beaver
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust is delivering small-scale woodland creation with Nature for Climate funds in the Cheshire part of the National Park. This includes the first agro-forestry scheme in the Peak District
- Peakland Environmental Farmers is a group of about 70 farmers in the Dark and South-West Peak co-ordinated by the Game & Conservation Wildlife Trust who are looking at the opportunities for attracting green finance to support the delivery of public goods. FiPL funding has helped support the group which has now attracted National Heritage Lottery funding to support a co-ordinator.
- Other farmer groups also support delivery for landscape and nature recovery including the Hope Valley, Bradfield, White Peak and Peak Farmers Groups.

**Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

**Financial:**

10. The activities in the early years of the Authority Plan 2023-28 and National Park Management Plan 2023-28 have funding and resources identified to deliver them. However, this will need to be kept under review following the implementation of the Authority's organisational change process and future funding as we move through the

delivery period.

**11. Risk Management:**

The main risks of the Authority being unable to deliver to the landscape and nature recovery aim is the resource challenge of both the Authority in terms of a flat cash settlement, its partners and the adequacy of financial incentives, such as ELM scheme payments, the requirements for farmers, land managers and land owners to engage with landscape and nature recovery and how the fast-paced developments of private funding opportunities for nature recovery evolve and settle. Whilst these risks are being mitigated by focussing on the priority aims and objectives in the Authority Plan they are not wholly within the control of the Authority.

**Sustainability:**

**12.** Our work on landscape and nature recovery directly improves the sustainability of the National Park as a place.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:**

**13.** There are no direct implications for equalities in the activities contained within this report. Indirectly, responding to landscape and nature recovery could have a positive impact on the nine protected characteristics by providing a more resilient environment.

**14. Climate Change**

Many of the activities being delivered for landscape and nature recovery also contribute to the Authority's role in climate change. The work with farmers, land managers and land owners supports the conservation and enhancement of moorland, woodland and trees, species rich grassland, regenerative farming techniques such as herbal leys and water corridors. The use of both national and private sector funding are involved. There is growing interest in regenerative farming and in particular the use of herbal leys and wood pasture.

**15. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

**16. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Nature Recovery Plan Update for the Peak District Land Managers' Forum.

Appendix 2 - Environmental Land Management Peak District Test and Trial Summary.

Appendix 3 - Farming in Protected Landscapes Summary of delivery 2022/2023.

Appendix 4 - Farming in Protected Landscapes Project Examples.

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

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