

LANDSCAPE AND NATURE RECOVERY AIM OVERVIEW (SLF)

1. Purpose

To inform Members about the Authority's progress in landscape and nature recovery since March 2025 and what this means for the future.

2. Context

2.1 The 26 July 2024 Authority meeting agreed the Programmes and Resources themes would continue to align with the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). This paper continues this programme of reporting against the NPMP aims with a focus on Landscape and Nature Recovery.

2.2 The NPMP 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 activities described in this report contribute to all seven of the [special qualities](#), and in particular Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#) - the PDNP is a resilient landscape in which nature, beauty, and cultural heritage are significantly enhanced:

2.2.1 Objective 4: To be a place where nature recovers and biodiversity flourishes

2.2.2 Objective 5: To understand, appreciate and enhance the cultural heritage and in particular built environments of the NP as part of an ever-changing landscape

2.2.3 Objective 6: To protect and enhance the natural beauty of the PDNP's contrasting and ever-evolving landscape

Also Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Three [Welcoming Place](#) and Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the NPMP. They also contribute to the [Authority Plan](#) Aims One, Two, Three and Four actions.

2.3 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 was revised and launched in December 2025 [Environmental Improvement Plan 2025](#)

2.4 Members approved the incorporation of the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) targets into the current NPMP at the Authority AGM in July 2025 (Minute 85/25). Natural England (NE) continue to work on the supporting data and the definitions of the targets and the anticipation now is that they will be co-developed and modified as more data becomes available. Whilst the name of the framework implies the measurement of outcomes the targets are in fact intent/inputs based. Work continues to evolve the framework with a team, including PDNPA strategy and performance team, drawn from across Protected Landscapes (PLs) supporting revision of underlying data by NE. The PDNPMP is due for revision in 2026/27 and methods to track and report partner activity as well as actual change, outcomes, on the ground will be developed during that process. It is anticipated that the NPMP review programme will be presented to members later this year.

2.5 The Government has recently announced its ambition to continue to support farmers to manage their land in ways that deliver environmental benefits as they produce food. Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) Capital Works Grant and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) are to re-open this summer with the first SFI

application window aimed at smaller farms and those not in any current ELM scheme. Unfortunately, the relaunched SFI excludes actions which deliver for the uplands e.g. species rich grassland which will now only be available via Higher Tier (HT), opportunities for which remain extremely limited. So, collective feedback with other Protected Landscapes and environmental organisations is being shared with Defra.

- 2.6** The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has continued to be successful both nationally and locally (Please see [National FiPL Report 2025](#)) resulting in continued funding for FiPL officers and a £1.6 Million project fund for PD farmers and land managers in 2026/27 with the same indicative allocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29. There is also an additional allocation for the restoration or creation of Wildlife Rich Habitat (non SSSI land). However, FiPL is increasingly focused on capital projects so effective and attractive ELMs are needed to deliver landscape and nature recovery.
- 2.7** The Land Use Framework has not yet emerged following the Government consultation on a new approach to Land Use in January 2024.
- 2.8** The six Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS's) which cover the PDNP are now virtually complete although vary in style and content.
- 2.9** The Authority responded to a government consultation on the review of the Heather & Grass Burning Regulations, following which new regulations came into force in September 2025. This significantly extends the area over which a license is now required to burn moorland vegetation, reducing the threshold to 30 cm. peat depth and covering all land within Less Favoured Areas (previously 40cm. depth and just within SSSIs), in order to protect carbon stores, biodiversity and water quality.

3. Progress since March 2025

3.1 Members will be aware from previous reports 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 sections below summarise the activities focused on since March 2025 and look to continue and develop.

3.2 Influencing:

- 3.2.1** The work of the Authority's Officers at national stakeholder meetings representing both the English NPAs and the PDNPA has continued. Increasingly Authority Officers are working with the Protected Landscapes Partnership, National Parks Partnership, National Parks England (NPE) and in particular NPE's Nature Recovery Leaders Group.
- 3.2.2** The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan (PDNRP) will continue to be used to influence the delivery of and complement the six county-based LNRS's. Input into the LNRS's has been prioritised so the PDNRP 'guidance map' and governance arrangements will not be completed until July 2026.
- 3.2.3** Cross Service officers have worked together to clarify the future role of the Authority and implications of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This included responding to a government consultation amending BNG Regulations to maintain conservation benefits whilst reducing the burden on developers and planning authorities. A report is being prepared for Members to consider whether or not the Authority should offer to enter into agreements with landowners wishing to market BNG Sites.
- 3.2.4** FiPL learnings and case studies continue to feed into the design of the ELM schemes. Please see Appendix 1 for details of case studies and infographic summarising what has been delivered.

- 3.2.5** Existing Landscape scale partnerships – Moors for the Future and Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Pilot continue to provide learnings which are shared with other Protected Landscape organisations and partners to influence future national and regional support.
- 3.2.6** The Authority continued to build on the ‘retreat’ with key moorland managers, representatives and stakeholders with a site visit to build a shared understanding of what good looks like and the role of moorland in nature recovery.
- 3.2.7** The Authority’s own land continues to demonstrate environmental land management e.g. the Warslow Moors Estate as part of the Morridge Hill Country ELM Landscape Recovery Pilot Project including Pump Farm as a demonstration farm and nature recovery hub.
- 3.2.8** The 2025 annual report of the Authority’s activities to retain the European Diploma for Protected Areas Award has been submitted. The Authority has held the award since 1966 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.” Please see [European Diploma - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats \(coe.int\)](#).

3.3 Delivering:

- 3.3.1** The work of the Authority’s farm advisers with farmers and land managers brokering ELMs and supporting the delivery of FiPL has continued. However, the short window and restricted budget for Capital Grant Scheme (CGS) in Summer 2025 and the sudden withdrawal of SFI March 2025 has had an impact on delivery and successful applications. Despite this farm advisers completed and/or provided advice and support for 8 CGS applications, 2 HT permissive access applications, 9 FiPL applications and 1 England Woodland Creation Offer (10ha). The FiPL team also supported 1 CGS application, approx. 6 SFI applications and 2 HT applications focused on nature recovery & 5 HT permissive access applications. A trainee has been appointed to work with farm advisers and Morridge Hill Country Project. The Cultural Heritage Team provided heritage management advice for 21 HT applications.
- 3.3.2** Landscape scale projects -
 - 3.3.2.1** Moors for the Future – updates have been provided through separate reporting mechanisms.
 - 3.3.2.2** South West Peak Landscape Partnership – delivery has continued through legacy projects e.g. Wader Project. Relationships built during this five-year programme have continued to be developed through Morridge Hill Country.
 - 3.3.2.3** Morridge Hill Country (MHC) Landscape Recovery Pilot Project – the development phase has been extended to August 2026 to complete the application process which is complex with Defra requirements evolving with learnings from Rounds 1 and 2. Interest and support from participating farmers, land owners and managers remain high it is hoped that the pilot will lead to a twenty-year delivery phase with both public and private sector funding. Working with National Parks Partnership the potential to aggregate combined NPA led Landscape Recovery project carbon outputs for potential buyers. Please see Appendix 2 for MHC project update.

- 3.3.2.4 White Peak Landscape Recovery (PD Limestone Farmers) - whilst no Defra funding was secured through Landscape Recovery a farmer Steering Group has explored ways of encouraging farmer participation, green finance opportunities and future governance. Natural England Protected Sites Strategy Pilot has contributed approx. £16,000 and the Authority in-kind match funding. FiPL support to further develop this Farmer Collaborative Group will continue in 2026/27.
- 3.3.2.5 Landscape Connections “Building the Foundations for Corridor Connections” - the National Lottery Heritage Fund has recently awarded the Authority funding for an eighteen-month pre-development phase to develop a further application to develop a landscape scale nature recovery project based on the trails in the White Peak.
- 3.3.3** A range of smaller-scale projects such as the invasive species project, clearing Himalayan Balsam from the Dove catchment have been delivered.
- 3.3.4** The Authority led ELM Test & Trial findings on the role of NPAs as local convener and in local delivery has enabled Authority officers to participate in Defra meetings exploring future farmer networking, collaboration and advice. Defra has allocated £10 million to pilot a new approach in 2026/27 which as details emerge will provide opportunities for PDNPA.
- 3.3.5** 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 an additional 3 years funding for the programme to March 2029. Please see Appendix 1.
- 3.3.6** The Woodland Trust Partnership extending and growing the arrangements for small-scale woodland creation using Nature for Climate funds. Farm advisers have supported approximately 87 ha of woodland created to date including 6 ha in 2025/26.
- 3.3.7** The Landscape Trees Project, grant funded via the Peak District Foundation, is a new project set up to establish landscape trees across the White Peak and other areas of the NP. Farm advisers are currently dealing with 40 enquiries for funding individual trees (field boundary and in-field trees), guards and tree shelters as well as small areas of tree planting.
- 3.3.8** 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.
- 3.3.9** One project to underground overhead electric wires was completed last year, at North Lees Hall/Bronte Cottage. Several further schemes are being developed with electricity supply companies, including Arbor Low, Gradbach/The Roaches, Parsley Hay, Ladybower and in partnership with the National Trust at Longshaw. In Longdendale, the Landscape Enhancement Initiative in partnership with UU and FiPL is funding enhancement and improvements to the Trans-Pennine Trail to help offset the visual impact of the high-voltage electricity lines.
- 3.3.10** Since the last report Members have been briefed on the significant development of the use of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) mapping, related species modelling and natural capital assessment approach developed here in the PD. AI mapping will be further integrated along with the use of the Resist, Accept, Direct framework for a landscape management approach to nature recovery and heritage feature conservation in the revised NPMP.

3.3.11 The Historic-England funded Archaeological Research Frameworks project has commenced. This is co-ordinating specialist analysis from external consultants to help understand knowledge gaps with a focus on drivers for landscape change and how this affects the historic environment. It is being designed to be used across multiple sectors, especially organisations involved in nature recovery and will engage local communities please see Appendix 3.

3.4 Regulatory:

3.4.1 Regulatory work, notably planning has included dealing with 308 ecological consultations in 2025, including a significant number of applications requiring BNG.

3.4.2 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations enquiries, advice and support. Farm advisers have dealt with 7 compliance enquiries/investigations involving potential loss of habitat and 2 formal screening consultations. Best practice guidance is being developed to enable the NPA to seek EIA approval for bale grazing within the NP. The objective is to make land managers aware of the implications of the EIA Regulations, promote best practice, and remove administrative burden for regenerative farmers.

3.4.3 Land management consultations include 29 Felling Licences, 1 England Woodland Creation Offer, 1 Woodland Management Plan, 30 other informal woodland/hedgerow consultations, 1 Hedgerow Regulation, 1 Section 156 Land disposal, 11 SFI/Countryside Stewardship Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) review requests, 3 Chatsworth Inheritance Tax Exemption Management Plan consultations.

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

3.5.1 Sheffield Moors Landscape Partnership.

3.5.2 Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust managing their Ughill Farm, Bradfield with a nature recovery focus.

3.5.3 Derwent, Dove and other Catchment Partnerships.

3.5.4 NE led partnership Ravine Woodland Project continues to mitigate the impacts of Ash Dieback on the internationally designated PD Dales Ash woodlands.

3.5.5 NE continues to work towards our collective ambitions for nature recovery in the White Peak through initiatives such as Catchment Sensitive Farming and the PD Dales Protected Sites Strategy Pilot. In the Dark and South-West Peak the focus is on the moorland protected sites. NE has started supporting farmers and land managers with applications to the newly released HT scheme but capacity issues mean this will only deliver 12 agreements across the PD in the first phase of work in 2025/26.

3.5.6 NT continue to develop their High Peak Estate ELM Landscape Recovery project and Vision for their White Peak estate including the recent purchase an ex dairy farm.

3.5.7 [Wild Peak](#) project led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

3.5.8 Derwent Living Forest (kickstarted by Derwent Connections) led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

3.5.9 Derbyshire Species Recovery Group, and various species or habitat specific groups, e.g. woodland, water vole, beavers, willow tits.

- 3.5.10** Cheshire Wildlife Trust is delivering small-scale woodland creation with Nature for climate funds in the Cheshire part of the NP including the first agro-forestry scheme in the PD.
- 3.5.11** Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is working with City of Trees to deliver a similar programme of small woodland creation in Derbyshire, in and out of the NP.
- 3.5.12** Peakland Environmental Farmers is a group of about 80 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 and/or grants to support the delivery of public goods. FiPL is funding an in-depth analysis of the opportunities for environmental delivery on 9 holdings. This builds on previous FiPL support and a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant.
- 3.5.13** Other farmer groups also support delivery for landscape and nature recovery including the Hope Valley, Bradfield, White Peak, Estates and Hayfield Groups. Most groups have received specific FiPL support for nature/landscape recovery projects and facilitation. Extra-curricular school farming clubs are also now being supported at Lady Manners School and Hope Valley College.
- 3.5.14** The Ecton Partnership continues to delivery for heritage and nature on Ecton Hill, drawing on external funding opportunities as they arise.

4 Recommendations

- 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.**

5. Corporate Implications

a. Legal

Pursuant to section 65(5) of the Environment Act 1995, the Authority has power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the accomplishment of its statutory purposes. These projects and activities fall within the Authority's statutory purposes. Pursuant to sections 5 and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Authority must deliver to the statutory purposes and statutory duty, respectively, when carrying out its work. Monitoring the Authority's progress against the aims and objectives set out in the NPMP will enable appropriate scrutiny and safeguard legal compliance.

b. Financial

Activities in the early years of the Authority Plan and NPMP 2023-28 had funding and resources identified to deliver them. However, recent organisational changes particularly the reduction in core funding for nature, landscape, farm advice and engagement and reduction in revenue funding has impacted capacity and delivery in 2025/26. As the revised structure and three-year Defra settlement are fully implemented the "landscape and nature" activities the Authority is engaged will need to be kept under review.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The activities described in this report contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:

- The NPMP and Authority Plan as described in para 2.2. above.
- The 30 by 30 target through which the Government has agreed to conserve (protect) 30% of land by 2030.

- The Landscape Strategy 2023 approved by Authority Members in December 2022 (minute reference 99/22).
- The PDNRP [approved by Members in April 2024](#).

d. Risk Management

The main risk to delivering the landscape and nature recovery aim is resources for the Authority (organisational change, reducing revenue budget), key partners and the wider economy. In addition, the legacy from ELMs pauses means confidence in the future direction of travel remains dented. Whilst there is growing awareness of private/green finance how much this will amount to and how accessible particularly, for upland family farms remains uncertain. The risk that farmers and land managers may continue or return to focusing on food production rather than nature recovery, adaptation and mitigation of climate change remains. Whilst these risks continue to be mitigated by focusing on the priority aims and objectives in the Authority Plan, FiPL and Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery project delivery they are not wholly within the control of the Authority.

e. Net Zero

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 owners support the conservation and enhancement of moorland, woodland and trees, species rich grassland using both national and private sector funds. There is growing interest in regenerative farming techniques (herbal leys, rotational grazing, riparian corridors), carbon management and private sector/green finance.

f. Sustainability

Our work on landscape and nature recovery directly improves the sustainability of the NP as a place.

g. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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.

6. Background papers (not previously published)

None.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Farming in Protected Landscapes Case Studies 2025.

Appendix 2 – Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Project Update.

Appendix 3 – Cultural Heritage Projects Summary.

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12 March 2026

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