



Department
for Environment,
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Policy paper

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

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Our National Parks and National Landscapes, collectively known as Protected Landscapes, are home to some of our most iconic and beautiful places. These remarkable landscapes support our nation's health and wellbeing. They're also crucial to delivering our commitments to tackle climate change and restore nature, including our international commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Each of our Protected Landscapes is unique. This is both in the challenges they face and the huge potential they offer to become the type of nature-rich areas we want to see across the country. We want our Protected Landscapes to be distinctive cultural landscapes that are alive with biodiversity and where rural businesses prosper. We want these landscapes to be enjoyed responsibly by a diverse range of people, enhancing wellbeing for all of society. We want our farmers to benefit from good quality soils, clean water and an abundance of pollinators.

Protected Landscapes are havens for native plants and wildlife. They hold swathes of irreplaceable ancient woodland and species-rich grassland, and they store carbon within their extensive tracts of deep peat. They are home to some of our most endangered species such as red squirrel, curlew and water vole. An estimated 270 million visitors are drawn to these iconic places every year, to feel the benefits of being immersed in nature. People also come to experience the heritage assets which give such a sense of history, place and our cultural identity.

This abundance of natural and cultural capital must be protected. There is also huge potential to improve outcomes at a scale that can make positive changes for current and future generations to enjoy. Protected Landscapes have dedicated teams in their National Park Authorities, Conservation Boards and National Landscape Partnerships (collectively referred to here as Protected Landscape bodies). These teams contain a depth of knowledge and understanding of their areas and the rural economies in which they operate. They use strong and trusted relationships with local communities to get the best out of each landscape. This offers an excellent opportunity to place them at the forefront of coordinating the local action needed to achieve our bold ambitions. The Protected Landscape bodies cannot reach these targets on their own. Success will require active participation by a wide range of stakeholders from across all sectors.

Protected Landscapes: achieving their potential

To support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place we are establishing ambitious targets for National Parks and National Landscapes. These targets will promote the actions that

are most needed to achieve positive changes. They will set the ambition for how we expect Protected Landscapes to achieve 3 outcomes from our [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>) 2023:

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

To work towards these outcomes we have identified the EIP targets that we expect Protected Landscapes bodies and other relevant authorities and partners to prioritise and focus on. These prioritised EIP targets are those that:

- are most relevant to National Park and National Landscapes' statutory purposes
- have data available at the right spatial level
- Protected Landscape bodies can influence the progress of, by mobilising partners, including through their statutory management plans

The framework builds on new legislation in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act that strengthens how relevant authorities must deliver the purposes of Protected Landscapes. We have committed to take forward secondary legislation that will require relevant authorities to help develop and implement management plans for Protected Landscapes.

We want to support strategic planning across Protected Landscapes, supporting effective delivery plans to achieve multiple targets. Complementing existing protected sites' management plans, local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) will identify the best locations to deliver actions for nature recovery. They will be an important evidence base to aid effective planning for nature recovery activities as part of the Protected Landscapes' management plans. All public bodies within Protected Landscapes must have regard to LNRS. National Park Authorities will in future have to take account of them when preparing their Local Plan, including the specific locations and actions they propose.

The framework will empower Protected Landscape bodies, relevant authorities, farmers, land managers and other organisations to work together in planning and targeting resources and activity. This will improve outcomes at a local and national level. The Protected Landscapes Partnership will have an important role in identifying areas for joint working across landscapes, promoting rural growth through green financing initiatives, and sharing learning and best practice.

Many Protected Landscapes already have ambitious nature recovery plans. We encourage Protected Landscape bodies, both individually and collectively, and their local partners to push their ambition and go above and beyond the targets set here. These targets should be seen as a minimum contribution rather than a limit on a Protected Landscape's ambition.

The framework provides a mechanism for measuring progress and delivery towards the outcomes. It will demonstrate the vital role that Protected Landscapes can play in tackling some of the most important challenges faced by society whilst continuing to support the rural economy and its rural communities. Being able to evidence progress in this way will highlight opportunities for economic growth and investment. It will enable Protected Landscape bodies and their partners, including farmers and land managers, to mobilise green investment into natural capital.

Protected Landscape bodies have strong and trusted relationships with farmers and landowners within and beyond their boundaries. Our farming schemes incentivise farmers and land managers to take action across the countryside to support nature and these objectives have been clearly set out in the EIP. We want to build on the success of our Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL). We also recognise the value of the strong, trusting local relationships and bespoke advice offered by Protected Landscape bodies to land managers in their area. As more farmers transition into schemes, we expect Protected Landscape bodies to work with farmers and land managers to support them into the schemes which are best for them. This will aid farmers to take actions that contribute to national and Protected Landscapes targets in a way that works for their local circumstances and businesses. It will help with delivering profitable food production alongside the recovery of nature.

Protected Landscape targets

The Protected Landscape targets are non-statutory and create a shared ambition for all 44 of England's Protected Landscapes. The targets are for the Protected Landscapes as places (the geographic area covered by the designation). Action will be coordinated by Protected Landscape bodies through their statutory management plan. It will be the responsibility of all stakeholders, partners and land managers in the area to support their delivery.

Some targets are action focused, while others set a clear numerical target for how much Protected Landscapes are expected to contribute as areas to the national targets.

The targets are based on an analysis of the environmental potential of the Protected Landscapes. They are also set proportionally, based on the characteristics of these areas and the share of relevant natural assets within them. The targets are set for Protected Landscapes as geographical areas and will be delivered and monitored as such.

The targets in this framework are set at a national level for all 44 landscapes as a collective. Each individual Protected Landscape body, working with relevant local partners, will set their own individual contribution, which will be embedded in their management plan. Natural England will support this process and ensure contributions represent a fair share and add up to the national total.

An annex sets out how these targets should be incorporated into National Park and National Landscapes' management plans and how we will monitor progress.

Thriving plants and wildlife targets

Protected Landscapes have significant environmental potential, containing almost half of England's priority habitats. They also contain over half of our most precious sites for biodiversity, land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). To ensure these habitats are reaching their full potential for nature recovery, we have set targets to motivate more activity on the components needed to ensure wildlife can thrive.

The protection, restoration, creation, and management of priority habitats will increase species abundance. It will help turn the tide on extinction risk and support our international commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030 ([30by30 \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-30by30-on-land-in-england\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-30by30-on-land-in-england)). The adoption of nature friendly farming practices will help stop biodiversity loss and increase species abundance alongside sustainable food production.

Protected Landscape bodies and partners should seek to increase the amount of land in favourable management in Protected Landscapes through meeting the targets below and other available means. This will maximise the contribution that Protected Landscapes can make towards our national targets for nature recovery.

Target 1

Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).

Target 2

Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.

Target 3

For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.

Target 4

Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.

Target 5

Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets

Protected Landscapes contain some of the UK's most important carbon stores, including significant tracts of peatland, woodland and hedgerows providing important carbon sinks for achieving net zero. To ensure we are maximising the opportunities for climate mitigation within our Protected Landscapes we have set targets for restoring peat and increasing tree planting. Restoration and ongoing management of these habitats is essential for sequestering and storing carbon into the future, and therefore reducing net greenhouse gas emissions. They can also provide natural flood management and other benefits for farmers and local communities.

Protected Landscapes are leading action to achieve net zero at a landscape level, working with residents, businesses and communities, aiming to reduce emissions and deliver nature-based solutions. We have set a target to support them in this ambition and strengthen their important contribution to our world leading target to achieve net-zero by 2050.

Tree planting and peat restoration at scale will support new skills and green jobs, attract private investment and help grow the rural economy.

For the long-term protection of our iconic landscapes, action is needed to increase their resilience and that of the communities within them. We must mitigate climate risks through nature-based solutions and adapt to the unavoidable impacts, planning for a changing future.

Target 6

Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

Target 7

Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.

Target 8

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment targets

Protected Landscapes are designated for their natural beauty and provide a range of health and wellbeing benefits and educational opportunities. We know these benefits are not currently being enjoyed equally by all parts of society. Protected Landscapes have a distinctive sense of place and represent our shared heritage and national identity. These special qualities must be protected for everyone to enjoy. The EIP made a commitment that everyone in England should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space. It also committed to reduce other barriers that prevent people from accessing green and blue spaces, such as physical challenges, lack of confidence and lack of information. Protected Landscapes should be setting the standard for meeting this commitment, leading efforts to increase responsible access and engagement with nature.

To ensure that more people have the opportunity to enjoy and learn from these special places, we have set targets to improve accessibility for all. Protected Landscapes are leading the way to promote accessibility to the natural environment. They are using a range of tools such as engaging schools, providing disabled facilities and improving trails and waymarking. Targets will also conserve the important sense of place that these landscapes bring to our country and communities.

The government wants to boost visitor numbers in a safe and manageable way for local areas, allowing people, communities and businesses to reap the benefits of tourism, growing the rural economy, whilst preserving heritage and natural assets.

We rely on Protected Landscape bodies to gather relevant data to measure progress towards our beauty, heritage and engagement outcome. We will continue to work with Protected Landscape bodies and other partners to explore the benefits of further developing targets to improve and promote accessibility and engagement.

Target 9

Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

Target 10

Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

Annex: Embedding targets into statutory management plans

National Park Authorities and National Landscape Partnerships and Conservation Boards (Protected Landscape bodies) should incorporate the targets into their statutory management plans. Targets set a high level of ambition for Protected Landscapes. However, we believe the ambition is achievable based on:

- the available baseline data
- opportunity mapping
- trajectory information derived from policy and project analysis

For some targets, including habitat creation, tree canopy cover and protected sites condition, the data shows that the potential to affect change within Protected Landscapes is greater than across the rest of the country. As such, we have set a higher level of ambition for Protected Landscapes to deliver on our national targets.

Natural England will work with individual Protected Landscape bodies to apportion the targets set out in our targets and outcomes framework appropriately between them, based on local circumstances including potential partner contributions and other evidence. Apportioned targets will be agreed between individual Protected Landscapes and Natural England within 18 months of publication of the Targets and Outcomes Framework. Where a new management plan is not due to be published within the 18-month window, Protected Landscape bodies should set provisional targets, published on their website.

We will use the indicators set out below to measure progress towards the targets and outcomes set out in this framework. Unlocking this data will also help mobilise green investment into our Protected Landscapes. These indicators align with our EIP targets and outcomes and the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. Natural England will be responsible for collating data (where available on an annual basis), to demonstrate how Protected Landscapes are progressing towards their targets. This information will be published as part of the EIP Annual Reporting process. This

will enable Protected Landscapes bodies, Defra and the national Protected Landscape Partnership to help target action, resources, learning and best practice to accelerate progress towards desired targets.

We will review the framework at least every 5 years, linked to refreshes of the [EIP \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan). We will adjust the targets and indicators in the interim as necessary to ensure they remain relevant and functional. We will work with partners, including Protected Landscape bodies, as part of any review of the targets and indicators. The numerical targets are based on an analysis of the environmental potential of the Protected Landscapes. They are also set proportionally, based on the characteristics of these areas and the share of relevant natural assets within them. The targets are set for Protected Landscapes as geographical areas and will be delivered and monitored as such.

Our national targets extend beyond the next 5 years (beyond one management plan cycle) and this must be reflected in managements plans. In practice we expect Protected Landscapes to develop bespoke interim targets and actions for the current 5-year plan period and a clear pathway for how the longer-term targets will be achieved.

Actions to improve water quality should be planned and delivered at catchment level. As such we have not set targets for the ecological status of water within Protected Landscapes. Instead, we require Protected Landscape management plans to support the priorities and actions identified in relevant water catchments to improve the water system. Similarly, it is not possible to set a single target for the wide range of activity needed to help these landscapes adapt to the impacts of climate change. As published in the [Third National Adaptation Programme \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-national-adaptation-programme-nap3\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-national-adaptation-programme-nap3) we require all Protected Landscapes to have climate change adaptation plans produced, embedded in, or linked with, their statutory management plans by 2028. This will be a requirement for all future management plans.

LNRS will be an important tool for aiding effective planning for nature recovery activities as part of management plans. Statutory guidance for LNRS states that responsible authorities should engage with local partner organisations. They should find out what environmental projects are already planned or underway to see if they could be included as potential measures. This allows the LNRS to incorporate existing relevant work and to align with other environmental spatial strategies. This includes the statutory management plans for National Parks and National Landscapes, which will now include the Protected Landscapes' targets. LNRS in turn will help identify suitable areas for habitat creation or restoration and in setting local priorities, which can help achieve both national and local targets.

Assessing progress towards our Protected Landscape targets

We will use the following indicators to measure progress towards the targets and outcomes set out in the framework.

Thriving plants and wildlife indicators

The following indicators will measure progress on the 'thriving plants and wildlife' targets:

- extent of wildlife rich habitat created or restored within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites
- percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition
- percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition
- extent of priority habitat within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites, in favourable management through agri-environment schemes
- percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land

Mitigating and adapting to climate change indicators

The following indicators will measure progress on the 'mitigating and adapting to climate change' targets:

- the level of greenhouse gas emissions within Protected Landscapes
- extent of peat under restoration in Protected Landscapes
- extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

In future we intend to focus our access metrics on our EIP commitments that everyone should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space and we will work to remove barriers to access.

The following indicators will measure progress on the 'enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement' targets:

- improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme:
 - metres of accessible path as a percentage of total path
 - number of accessible toilets and rest stops
 - number of disability accessible parking spaces
 - number of accessible gates and gaps
 - number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment
 - number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the Protected Landscape boundary
 - number of volunteer days
 - number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved
 - policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers
- number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk. To separately cover the categories of:
 - scheduled monuments
 - registered parks and gardens
 - registered battlefields
 - listed buildings (grade I or II*)
 - protected wreck sites



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