



Accord between Forestry Commission (England) and National Parks England





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April 2018

Our Shared Ambition

Through this Accord we will work together to achieve the following shared ambition:

Woods and forests in England's National Parks are recognised as being at the forefront of sustainable forest management underpinned by the UK Forestry Standard and through this the delivery of relevant outcomes sought by the 25 Year Environment Plan and other relevant government policies. These are places where the stewardship of natural capital assets, cultural features and special qualities are central to land management decision making and the long-term view prevails. Woodland managers are admired for their pragmatic approach and principled management, delivering a range of benefits that protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage, nurture people's connections with woodlands and promote economic and social well-being.

Our Roles and Responsibilities

The nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority (hereafter collectively referred to as NPAs) work to common statutory purposes, namely:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Parks; and
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks by the public.

The Broads Authority has an additional statutory purpose to protect the interests of navigation. In pursuing these purposes, the NPAs have a duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of their local communities. Each National Park has a National Park Management Plan which is developed and delivered in partnership and provides a shared plan for the National Park area.

There is a statutory duty for relevant authorities, including Forestry Commission, to have regard to National Park purposes when coming to decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within the National Parks, and to attach greater weight to the purpose of 'conserving and enhancing' if it appears that there is a conflict between the two National Park purposes.

The National Park Authorities (NPAs) are local planning authorities for their areas and work with land owners, businesses and local communities to support sustainable development and neighbourhood planning.

The Forestry Commission (FC) is a non-ministerial government department whose mission is to protect and expand forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment.

In England, the FC's Forest Services works with the wide forestry sector to protect, improve and expand England's woodland.

Forest Enterprise is the agency of the FC that manages the Nation's Forests (formerly known as public forest estate). In early 2019 the Forest Enterprise name will change to Forestry England and wording of this Accord anticipates this change. Forestry England aims to connect everyone with the Nation's Forests. Forestry England aspires that people understand and value the Nation's Forests, to help support them, and to invest in them through commercial and public income. In this way Forestry England can then secure and grow the Nation's Forests for future generations, increasing their natural capital asset value and ensuring that they continue to provide places for people to enjoy, nature to flourish and business and the economy to grow.

Our Shared Values

In delivering our shared ambition we will:

- Identify, respect and celebrate local distinctiveness, fostering a tailored approach to delivery;
- Identify and pursue opportunities for shared, streamlined and efficient delivery that contributes to our shared ambitions;
- Identify areas of potential conflict early and work constructively to endeavour to find mutually acceptable solutions; and
- Adopt a pragmatic approach to National Park boundaries, recognising the interconnectedness of ecosystems and landscapes within and beyond them.

Our Shared Priorities

We will work together, with the involvement of other appropriate partners, across the following five priorities to achieve our shared ambition.

1. Decision-making that enhances National Park landscapes and the woodlands in them

National Parks are England's premier protected landscapes, and the vital importance of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty is underlined in government policy. The right trees in the right places make a valuable contribution to National Parks, their cherished natural and cultural landscapes and heritage, their important habitats and the species they support; and the people who rely on them for their home, living or recreation. We will develop ways of working that support high-quality decision-making on woodland creation, design, management, protection and removal, ensuring that the National Park and Forestry Commission purposes and duties and Government forestry policy priorities are delivered in ways that enhance the special qualities of the National Parks.

We will:

- Demonstrate and promote higher environmental standards for woodland creation, design and management in and around National Parks, using the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) as a minimum standard, wherever possible and appropriate, and that optimise these woodlands' contribution to delivery of the relevant outcomes sought by the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- Foster a culture of ongoing dialogue and sharing of expertise between Forestry Commission and NPA officers and relevant partners, including early consultation on relevant plans, strategies and proposals
- Develop a framework for better landscape impact decision making informed by best practice
- Develop collaborative approaches to increasing the diversity and resilience of National Park woodlands, including to the effects of pests, diseases, deer, grey squirrels and climate change

2. Woodland creation and expansion in National Parks

Woodland creation, expansion and tree planting is an immediate and long-term priority for Government and Forestry Commission and increased, appropriately sited woodland cover in National Parks is supported by the National Parks Circular. Together we recognise the wide range of benefits that well-planned, well-designed and well-located woodlands can provide, and we will coordinate our efforts to create more of these woodlands in National Parks.

We will:

- Develop a shared understanding of the opportunities for well-planned and designed woodland creation in each National Park, based on a core principle of the right trees in the right places
- Build our shared knowledge of the mechanisms and resources available to support woodland creation and design in the National Parks, as well as the constraints and barriers that exist and how we might collaborate in overcoming them
- Align our efforts and engagement to achieve a sustainable increase in woodland cover in and around the National Parks as a whole, of a type and scale appropriate to each National Park

3. Exemplary Forest Enterprise and NPA owned / managed woodlands in National Parks

One third of the Nation's Forests are located in National Parks and some NPAs also own or manage significant areas of woodland. We will ensure that these woodlands and open habitats demonstrate the highest standards of management and are at the vanguard of the natural capital approach.

We will:

- Develop our shared understanding of the natural capital of woodlands in National Parks
- Use this shared understanding to inform forward-thinking woodland management that optimises the public and private goods that they deliver, including the ecosystem services and benefits provided for communities, visitors, nature and the economy
- Take the long term view required to enhance the ecological and financial resilience of woodlands, so that they continue to deliver benefits for future generations of people, nature and the economy
- Explore the potential for local joint commercial ventures to create even more value and public benefit

4. Woodland grant schemes fit for the future

The support available to landowners and managers for creating and managing woodlands, and for wider land management, will have a significant bearing on their decisions.

Together we can have a positive influence on the design and delivery of grant schemes at both a national and a local level, seeking better integration of forestry and farming and promoting, advising on and encouraging the uptake of incentives that will contribute to the delivery of our shared ambition.

We will:

- Work together and with Defra to pilot schemes and approaches in National Parks that will help to inform post EU exit grant schemes
- Pursue opportunities for coordination in local priority-setting and delivery of future schemes, ensuring we provide consistent and joined-up advice to landowners and managers
- Maintain or enhance public access arrangements where new woodlands are being created, wherever possible

5. National Park woodlands for people

We share a desire to engage and connect people with woodlands and forests, nurturing a woodland culture, providing employment and easily accessible opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of woodlands in National Parks. Woodlands can also provide economic benefits for local people, communities and businesses, both through tourism and leisure activities and through woodland businesses.

We will:

- Develop opportunities for volunteering and apprenticeships to promote technical expertise in land management and understanding of woodlands, and help nurture the next generation of woodland managers
- Enable, coordinate and promote high quality, sustainable, accessible and well designed and managed experiences enabling physical activity, mental wellbeing, enjoyment and inspiration; where appropriate collaborate to deliver profitable leisure offers that can help sustain ongoing engagement in and management of woodlands.
- Collaborate on opportunities to support viable and productive woodland businesses in National Parks and those that rely on National Park woodlands for timber, fuel and other ecosystems services; for example through the development of whole estate plans or facilitating local training opportunities

Delivery and Review

National Park Authorities and Forestry Commission teams will come together to agree suitable arrangements for determining local focus and delivery. We will aim to reflect these in future National Park Management Plans and Area Integrated Plans.

We will review our progress in delivering the priorities on an annual basis and review the priorities themselves in 2021.



Sir Harry Studholme
Chair
Forestry Commission



Margaret Paren OBE
Chair
National Parks England

