

South Downs Nature Recovery Bulletin (March 2021)

This bulletin aims to summarise and update on the SDNPA Nature Recovery programme of work as well as throw some light on what is a fast evolving area of work. Whilst a humble beginning the aspiration is to improve the quality and presentation of the publication over time.

Nature Recovery is one of the four main themes in the SDNP Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 and SDNPA Corporate Plan 2021/22, and is also the main focus for the Landscape and Biodiversity Theme Programme Board for 2021+. The work ranges from developing the strategic context/framework for nature recovery through to practical delivery on the ground through projects, the work of teams and through new emerging mechanisms. There are also strong overlaps with the net zero for nature work in the **Climate Change Action Plan** and the developing **Agri-environment/ Farming in Protected Landscapes** work.

The Nature Recovery Working Group, a cross-directorate sub group of the Landscape & Biodiversity Theme Programme Board, leads the work programme. Meet the Team: Jeremy Burgess, Chris Fairbrother, Roni Craddock, Sonia Lorenzo-Martin and Adam Brown from CPM, Katherine Stuart and Ruth Childs from Planning, Ruth James and James Winkworth from Corporate Services.

National Policy Context: A brief summary

The **Nature Recovery Network** is identified within the Government's **25 Year Environment Plan** an integrated approach to nature recovery, bringing partners, policies and investment together to help address the crises facing biodiversity, climate and health. It has three main objectives:

- by 2042, 75 per cent of protected sites will be in favourable condition
- over half a million hectares of new wildlife-rich habitat outside of these sites will have been restored or created
- and wildlife populations will be recovering and lost species will be returning to their natural ranges.

Launched in 2018 it is based on the Lawton principle that in order to thrive, nature in this country needs bigger, better and joined areas of wildlife-rich habitat (Lawton Report: Making Space for Nature: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today>) The government's vision is for a single, national network improving and joining up wildlife-rich places (terrestrial, coastal and marine) across England in both rural and urban areas. But this national network will be created locally, with local nature recovery networks linking together to support nature's recovery at the larger, national scale. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network>

The legal framework and delivery mechanisms for the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) has been set out within the **Environment Bill**. Whilst delayed the

current communication is: "The government is committed to resuming passage of the Environment Bill as soon as possible. The resumption date is still yet to be confirmed and will be based on considerations of the whole parliamentary legislative schedule, which remains very busy as a result of COVID-19. We will inform all stakeholders as soon as a restart date is set". See this site for latest version and progress of the Bill through Parliament <https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-21/environment.html>

The Environment Act will set out where and how local nature recovery networks will be created and will provide a 'blueprint' for the application of other emerging mechanisms such as 'mandatory net gain'. Although the detail is not yet clear, the draft legislation proposes that the preparation of these strategies will be coordinated at a local level by public bodies (such as local authorities), who will be designated as



A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment



the '**Responsible Authorities**' by the Secretary of State. There are currently 5 pilot strategies commissioned which report back at the end of March 2021.

Natural England Guidance

Guidance on how the NRN will be created in practice is still being developed. A useful first step was the publication of a Nature Networks Evidence Handbook by Natural England <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6105140258144256> - to help the designers of nature networks by identifying the principles of network design and describing the evidence that underpins the desirable features of nature networks. It builds on the Making Space for Nature report of Lawton et al. 2010, outlining some of the practical aspects of implementing a nature network plan, as well as describing the tools that are available to help in decision making.

The NRN Delivery Partnership (NDP) was launched in November 2020. The NRN Delivery Partnership is a broad network of cross-sectoral organisations who work together to carry out action for nature, supported by Natural England. Organisations within any sector who are willing to commit to nature's recovery can join this partnership. This includes private business, charities and the government sector. Natural England will encourage partners to pledge support to achieve the objectives of the NRN. These pledges will vary depending on the organisation. Examples include providing:

- land for nature recovery
- financial investment
- advice, time or expertise

Partners will have networking opportunities, including an annual NRN conference, workshops and meetings.

National collaboration by the Protected Landscapes

The National Parks England family is working together at a national level to develop Delivery Plans across 4 key topics. **The Delivery Plans for the National Parks** are:

- Climate Leadership
- Wildlife in National Parks
- Sustainable Farming and Land Management
- Landscapes for Everyone

They are published on the NPE website, as PDFs. Just put a search in for Delivery Plans

https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/search?queries_keywords_query=Delivery+Plan&submit=Go

The **Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks** is to drive action in nature recovery as part of the collective response to the 25-year plan. National Parks sit at the heart of the nation's nature recovery network; 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.

National collaboration across NPE is currently supported through the secondment of Roni Craddock. The 10 national park opportunity maps are being developed. They are based on national data and are designed to be reproduced at A5 size – to ensure that they are strategic and not project based. They are following Lawton principles as you will see on the key, they also identify links for people and also areas of importance for nature outside the NP boundary. Catchment boundaries have informed a lot of the work.

A prospectus for each of the NPs is also being developed. These documents will also put an overall cost structure together for the national picture. The costs are based primarily on Countryside Stewardship + a multiplier for ELM taking into account the removal of BPS. This ensures we have a nationally consistent cost process.

The other element being worked on is the NRN backbone story map – the development of a story map is the first step to establishing what a national network could look like with the Protected Landscapes and National Nature Reserves and the basis and backbone of the network.



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB Partnerships, led by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB), have collectively pledged through the **Colchester Declaration** to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Early targets (by July 2020) include starting to prepare a nature recovery plan for each AONB; and creating more opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature. The NAAONB has a national steering group that is guiding the AONB Partnership's collective approach to nature recovery and providing a common framework for the AONB nature recovery plans.



NPUK Net Zero with Nature – Race to Zero

The UK National Parks are also coming together to promote the concept of **Net Zero with Nature**. This part of a national effort to drive action that addresses the twin challenges of climate change and nature recovery. This aims to create a UK marketplace for nature-based solutions to Climate Change. It will provide a powerful example of the leadership role that the UK National Parks can play, by :-

- **Accelerating progress for nature** - Safeguarding and restoring natural habitats and ecosystems to preserve biodiversity.
- **Encouraging our financial systems to be cleaner to unlock growth and green jobs** – creating a new financial model for funding of UK nature restoration, at a transformational scale.
- **Using nature to help society adapt and be resilient to the impacts of climate change** – not just to restore nature but also to defend against flooding, drought and fire, delivering a win-win for nature and people.

National Parks have an untapped potential for nature-based climate solutions at scale. Such work will increase the quality of habitats and biodiversity within some of the most loved and precious landscapes in the UK. As part of the UK National Parks contribution to COP26, there will also be a push to get all the National Parks (and potentially AONBs) signed up to the 'Race for Net-Zero'. This will see shared metrics and targets rolled out across all of the UK National Parks.

Net zero with nature directly links across, and is part of the nature recovery programme of work. For more information contact Chris.

A Regional Perspective

In 2020 collaboration between Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in the South East has resulted in the formation of the **South East Nature Partnership (SENP)**:

- Who is SENP? – made up of the Surrey, Kent, Sussex & Hants LNP Chairs plus representatives from the Protected Landscapes (SDNPA & Kent Downs), environmental NGOs, Local Authorities and statutory bodies (Natural England).
- What is SENP's role? - to work bigger, better and more joined up! It's about strategic coordination.
- SENP's aim? - working together on influencing decision makers, to support development of local nature recovery network and strategies, nature based solutions, vibrant economy and wellbeing – build back better!



SENP has already drafted Joint SE NRN Principles to support the need to join up. It's all about collaboration!

Equally a collaborative approach to nature recovery network mapping is also being discussed with the **South East England Protected Landscapes Group (SEEPL)**. The aspiration is to achieve a SENP and SEEPL united approach.

The role of the county level Local Nature Partnerships is also key to this work. The development of the Nature Recovery Network will be framed nationally with grassroots/local input. For the South Downs this is through joint working of the Sussex Local Nature Partnership and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Nature Partnership. For more detail on SDNPA engagement with the Nature Partnerships and regional working contact Claire.

South Downs National Park Authority – key work/outputs

This section focuses on the work we are directly undertaking as an organisation. The suite of “outputs” aims to enable stakeholders to do their bit for nature recovery whilst also making sure it is appropriate for the South Downs landscape.



The **SDNPA Nature Recovery work programme** currently comprises of the following:

- Developing a **Vision for nature recovery** in the SDNP (building upon the NPE Wildlife Delivery Plan)
- Assessing scope for **nature recovery by Landscape Character Area** (This will include “parameters of change” and a pictorial/ artistic impression for each LCA)
- Understanding and defining SDNPA role with respect to **Delivery Mechanisms** including green finance (work is underway on nitrate neutrality, carbon off-setting, ELM, Biodiversity Net Gain, a “call for sites” and Conservation Covenant Agreements. We are also working with others to see how we can support communities?)
- Developing a **Nature Recovery Campaign** (a “call to action” and a fundraising vehicle led by SD Trust based on success with Trees for Downs and Beelines)

- Developing framework for SDNPA Approach to **Biological Monitoring** (what does success look like?)

With future bulletins we will aim to detail progress of different elements of the nature recovery work programme but if you want more information contact Claire. For this first bulletin here is a summary covering the first and last items listed above, plus the delivery mechanism of Biodiversity Net Gain:

A Wildlife Delivery Plan for the South Downs

At a local level work is underway to develop a plan for nature recovery in the South Downs. This includes an overarching target to provide one third of land for nature and two thirds that is nature friendly, key principles, opportunities and priorities for our protected landscape. The delivery plan also includes a local Vision and a definition of Nature Recovery Networks, working drafts of these are included below. For more information contact Jeremy.

Our vision for the South Downs:

The South Downs National Park will be a climate resilient working landscape where all wildlife flourishes and communities thrive in a nature rich environment. By 2030 working with a strong partnership of farmers, land managers, communities and a wide range of partners we will deliver one third of land for nature and encourage two thirds to be nature friendly.

- *The Rich habitats of the South Downs will be enhanced, extended, connected and act as a core to a wider wildlife network.*
- *As a special landscape the South Downs will act as a nature rich core connecting to the wider countryside beyond its boundaries.*
- *Wildlife will flourish and will be able to move easily through the landscape and adapt to climate change.*
- *Our farmed landscape will remain productive but will also be a place where nature thrives.*
- *People living in and visiting the national park will be connected to the special landscape and the unique wildlife that lives here.*

Nature Recovery a definition:

A Nature Recovery Network is a joined up network of marine, coastal and terrestrial habitats where nature and people can thrive. The network allows wildlife movement from place to place and provides places to live, feed and breed which enables the natural world to adapt to change.

More than just a map, it is an active, adaptive spatial plan that identifies the best opportunities to deliver nature's recovery.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Work is underway to prepare interim guidance on achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through development proposals in the SDNP, and will be published this Spring. This guidance will support the implementation of Policy SD9(b) in the South Downs Local Plan which requirements development proposals to 'identify and incorporate opportunities for net gains in biodiversity' and will provide guidance on how to achieve BNG in the SDNP as a protected landscape.

BNG is set to become a mandatory requirement for development proposals across the country via the Environment Act, and will be accompanied by associated regulations and government guidance. Our SDNP interim guidance will be updated and finalised to reflect these. For more information contact Kate.

“Biodiversity Net Gain is
an approach to development
which leaves biodiversity in
a better state than before”

*Chartered Institute of Ecology and
Environmental Management
(CIEEM)*

A Biological monitoring framework

As it stands we do not have a comprehensive understanding of the state of biodiversity within the South Downs National Park. To remedy this, we have drafted a **Framework for Biodiversity Monitoring in the South Downs National Park**. Driven by a growing need to present a reliable and definitive answer to key questions such as the extent and condition of habitats and species populations within the SDNP, as well as the contribution of the South Downs National Park Authority and partners to local and national targets for habitat creation and restoration.

We focus on five key areas for monitoring; habitat extent, habitat condition, species, projects and planning, setting out our current position and an initial way forward. The broad partnership of local and national nature based organisations across the park will be integral to implementing the framework, including local recording groups and record centres.

Short term actions include the introduction of additional project/activity monitoring to capture extent of habitat work, a species prioritisation exercise to focus our work and the adoption of three national species monitoring schemes. A version of this Framework will be made available to support delivery during 2021/22. For more information contact Adam.

Nature recovery is full of terminology, acronyms and jargon – so each bulletin we will try to include a definition buster or a useful link!

What are Nature-based solutions?

As defined by the IUCN “Nature-based Solutions are defined as actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.”



<https://www.iucn.org/theme/ecosystem-management/our-work/iucn-global-standard-nature-based-solutions>

Claire Kerr
Countryside and Policy Manager – Eastern Downs
South Downs National Park Authority
South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH
Tel Reception: 01730 814810 | Direct Dial: 01730 819319 | Mobile: 07887 415148
www.southdowns.gov.uk | [Facebook](#) | [SDNPA Twitter](#) | [Ranger Twitter](#) | [Youtube](#)

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS