

South Downs Nature Recovery Bulletin (October 2021)



This second bulletin aims to summarise and update on the SDNPA Nature Recovery programme as well as throw some light on what is a fast evolving area of work involving many partners and a lot of collaboration. Whilst a humble beginning the aspiration is still to improve the quality and presentation of this publication.

Nature Recovery is one of the four main themes in the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/> and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Corporate Plan 2021/22

https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2021/04/SDNPA-Corporate-Plan-2021-22-FINAL_b.pdf

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.

National perspective:

Wildlife Delivery Plan for National Parks/ Mapping/ Prospectuses

National Parks England have developed a Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks (WDP) [Delivery-Plan-for-Wildlife-in-National-Parks-FINAL.pdf](https://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Delivery-Plan-for-Wildlife-in-National-Parks-FINAL.pdf) ([nationalparks.gov.uk](https://www.nationalparks.gov.uk)) to drive action in Nature recovery in response to the 25-year plan. The WDP sets out how 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.

Working with teams in each the NPAs, NPE has also developed a Nature Recovery prospectus and nature opportunity map for each of the ten English National Parks to show how these ambitions could be delivered on the ground.

Tripartite agreement:

This Joint Agreement by Natural England, National Parks England, and the National Association for AONBs sets out a pathway that will frame the organisation's joint work work and reaffirms the commitment to work together to conserve and enhance England's finest landscapes to bring more benefits for people and nature.

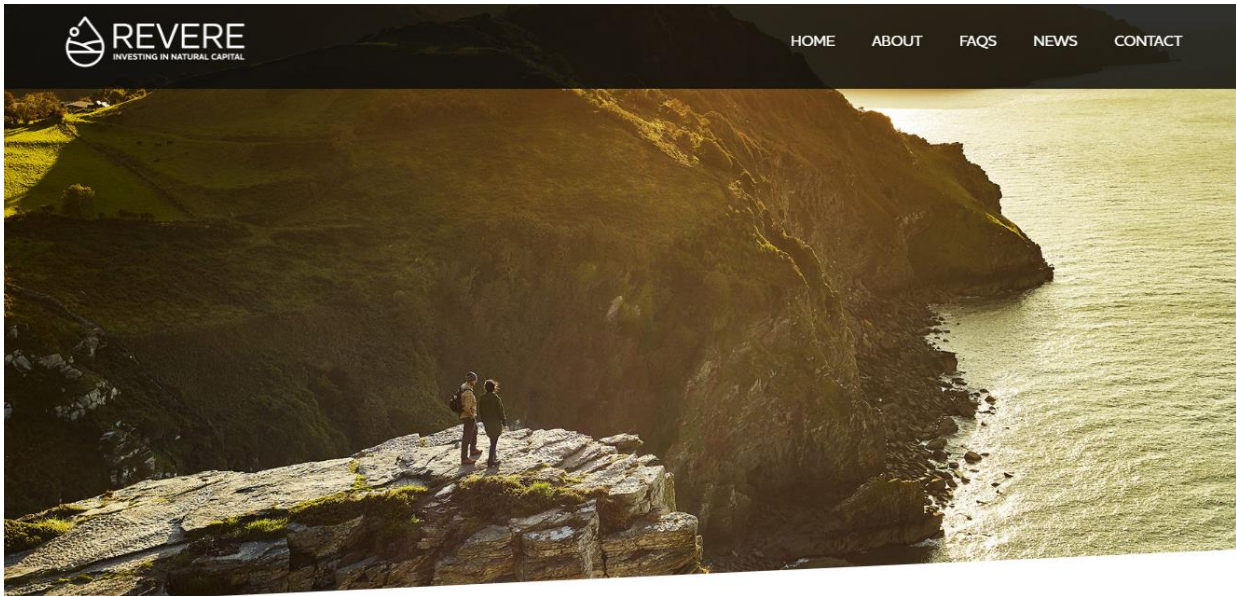
[Collaboration is key to delivering more for nature and people through our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Natural England \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.naturalengland.org.uk/blog/2021/09/collaboration-is-key-to-delivering-more-for-nature-and-people-through-our-national-parks-and-areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty)



NPUK Net Zero with Nature – Race to Zero

As part of preparations for COP26 in Glasgow in November, National Park UK are actively promoting the concept of 'Net Zero with Nature'. This highlights the role of the National Parks in meeting the national Net-Zero targets – through the delivery of nature-based solutions. Net Zero with Nature will seek to establish pilot projects across the National Park family that achieve scale, and attract new sources of investment – including private sector funding.

Link to the video here <https://revere.eco/news/revere-an-innovative-nature-restoration-facility-launches-at-uk-conference-with-funding-from-major-global-companies/>



The key message being that National Parks are uniquely placed to address the climate and nature crises. Collectively, they can influence change over 10% of the UK land area. With over 100 Million people visiting National Parks every year, they can help inform, encourage and support people to take individual and collective action. We can deliver adaptation responses at a landscape scale through our Partnership Management Plans and through the collaborative work on Nature Recovery networks.

Linked to this, the UK National Parks are also aiming to collectively sign-up to the 'Race to Zero' as a statement of intent. Based on the work they have been doing to establish a shared baseline and metrics for their carbon footprints. This includes a shared trajectory to achieving the target of National Parks being Net-Zero by 2040.

[Race To Zero Campaign | UNFCCC](#)

Just published new Natural England Research Report 'Carbon storage and sequestration by habitat: a review of the evidence (second edition)', where we have reviewed the scientific evidence base relating to carbon storage and sequestration by semi-natural habitats in England.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5419124441481216>

The report covers terrestrial, coastal and marine habitats, and the freshwater systems that connect them, in order to quantify their benefits for carbon.

Latest on the Environment Bill

'The government has committed to leaving the environment in a better state than that in which we inherited it. To make this happen, we need to ensure that environmental protection forms an integral part of policy development across government'

George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

The Environment Bill is a landmark piece of legislation that sets the agenda for environmental protection in the post Brexit era. The bill, first introduced to parliament in 2019 has been delayed many times. It is currently awaiting its third and final reading in the House of Lords, which is due on 13th October.

Environment Bill



The Environment Bill of the Parliament of the United Kingdom aims to improve air and water quality, protect wildlife, increase recycling and reduce plastic waste. The bill would be part of a new legal framework for environmental protection, given the UK no longer comes under EU law post-Brexit.

The bill will then enter its final stages with further scrutiny of the amendments before Royal assent. It is now expected to receive assent in the coming months.

Through the Environment Bill, we will clean up the country's air, restore natural habitats and increase biodiversity. The Bill will also outline how the government will reduce waste, make better use of resources, and improve management of water resources in a changing climate.

The Bill will crack down on water companies that discharge sewage into rivers and will include a world-leading legally binding species target for 2030, aiming to halt the decline of nature and to protect beloved British animals, such as red squirrels and hedgehogs

The bill introduces important new protections, including mandatory biodiversity net gain, conservation covenants and the development of local nature recovery strategies. A key section of the bill is Environmental Governance, this includes establishment of a new independent office for environmental protection (OEP) and the adoption of five Environmental Principles across government (integration principle, Prevention Principle, Rectification at source principle, polluter pays principle and Precautionary principle).

During the committee stages, there have been many proposed amendments including statutory targets for nature and strengthening section 62 duty. There has been considerable debate over the independence and powers of the OEP which will be the body overseeing the application of environmental laws. It will be interesting to see the final bill details when they eventually emerge.

Further information; [Environment Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

Environment Bill amended to extend net gain to major infrastructure projects

It has been confirmed that Biodiversity Net Gain will be required by NSIPs under an amendment to the Environment Bill. The following extract is taken from Planning Resource Daily (15-June-2021):

“Existing provisions in the Environment Bill would require developers to deliver ten per cent net biodiversity gain in most new schemes.

They would apply to all development permitted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, but campaigners have called on the government to extend the requirement to nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) determined via the Planning Act 2008 regime.

This (Monday) morning, the Treasury – in its [response](#) to the Dasgupta review on the economics of biodiversity – revealed that the government “will legislate to introduce biodiversity net gain for new nationally significant infrastructure projects in England through an amendment to the Environment Bill”.

The “significant move” will embed a “nature positive approach” to the development of many of England’s largest new infrastructure projects, the response said.

Proposals for a biodiversity net gain requirement for NSIPs will be tailored to the needs of major infrastructure projects where necessary, the document added.

The government will consult fully on the details of the policy design, the document continued, “including an appropriate transition period before biodiversity net gain becomes mandatory and any essential exemptions”.

In parallel, the government also announced today that the High Speed Two (HS2) rail link will aim to deliver a net gain in biodiversity on its Crewe-Manchester leg. According to the government, the move goes further than the existing commitment to deliver “no net loss” in biodiversity on HS2, and “sets a new standard for HS2’s environmental commitments”.

Environment minister Lord Goldsmith [had told peers last week](#) that the government is “exploring how a biodiversity net gain approach for big infrastructure projects could best be delivered”.

The Treasury’s response to the Dasgupta review also reveals that the government intends to consult later this year on the principles of a net gain approach for schemes located in the marine environment.

Under the Environment Bill’s biodiversity net gain provisions, developers would have to submit biodiversity net gain plans alongside planning applications. These would set out the biodiversity value of on-site habitat value before and after development, sets to be taken to minimise adverse effects and how the gains will be achieved.

An updated version of Natural England’s biodiversity metric – intended to provide developers, planners, land managers and others with a tool to calculate the baseline biodiversity of a site and how this can be increased – is expected to be published this summer, the response document stated.”



Nature Positive 2030

[Nature Positive 2030 | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#)

Through *Nature Positive 2030*, the five statutory nature conservation bodies of the UK have come together to identify how the UK can succeed in achieving these commitments along with ensuring that nature recovery plays its critical role in achieving net zero. In *Nature Positive 2030 – Evidence Report* we draw upon the extensive good practice that exists across the UK to present solutions that can be scaled up to achieve change. The Evidence Report is accompanied by a companion document, *Nature Positive 2030 – Summary Report*, which provides an easily accessible overview of the main findings and conclusions.



Natural England’s 2021/22 Action Plan

Natural England published their [2021/22 Action Plan](#) on 17-June that outlines our programme to help the nation build back greener in the year ahead.



As the nation recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, the remit and funding for Natural England has been expanded. This will help us establish our vision of creating thriving nature for people and the planet. Alongside our existing statutory functions, such as improving the condition of protected sites and making further reform to wildlife licensing, our increased responsibilities include:

- The Nature for Climate Fund – helping to restore Nature to tackle climate change by administering the new [Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme](#)
- Parts of the [Environment Bill](#) – delivering policies expected within the Environment Bill, including strategic solutions through the planning system, developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain
- The [Nature Recovery Network](#) - restoring sites, species and landscape quality through our Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership

- Project Speed – becoming a strategic statutory consultee on planning as part of ‘Project Speed’, a new Infrastructure Delivery Taskforce which aims to cut down the time it takes to develop, design and deliver vital infrastructure projects.
- Farm advice work – for example supporting [Catchment Sensitive Farming](#) and continuing to support Defra in designing the new [Environmental Land Management Scheme](#)
- Landscapes – new landscapes designations as part of the commitment to [protect 30% of our land by 2030](#)
- Accessibility – connecting people with nature by investing in our National Nature Reserves and making them more accessible
- Natural England will be front and centre in the nation’s recovery efforts with our boosted remit and funding. The Government’s vision in the 25 Year Environment Plan is for England to become the healthiest and most beautiful place in the world in which to live, work and bring up a family. This vision is embedded within our aims and objectives for the year ahead.

Natural England’s Action Plan for 2021/22 will contribute to thriving terrestrial and marine wildlife, achieving net zero through Nature-based solutions, such as peat restoration and tree planting, and increasing the sustainability of farming and fishing.

We have big ambitions for nature recovery and we look forward to working with you, our partners and colleagues, to deliver real progress on the ground during the year ahead!

Regional Perspective:

LNRS pilots & Defra Consultation

In August 2020, Defra launched 5 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) pilots to test the preparation process, produce prototype strategies and look at how LNRSs can align with other environmental strategies at a local level.

The pilots concluded in May 2021. This report summarises the key lessons and findings, focusing on the preparation of LNRSs, resources and capacity, data and evidence, collaboration and use of the LNRSs in practice:

[DEFRA LNRS Pilots - Lessons Learned](#)

DEFRA are currently consulting on how the government should implement Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) – in particular, how they should be prepared and what they should include. The consultation started 10th August and runs to 2nd November.

The consultation will inform:

1. The **Regulations** which will set out the process for preparing LNRS (the “how”)
2. The **Statutory Guidance** will set out what LNRS must contain (the “what”)

The format of the consultation is a questionnaire consisting of yes/no questions or options to select. There is little to no opportunity to add additional comments or clarify answers. The questions mainly relate to procedural and technical aspects the regulations, covering:

- How information will be shared between organisations
- Approaches to presenting information
- Processes for agreeing, engaging, consulting and reviewing LNRS

In addition to responding to the questionnaire, the SDNPA will be writing to DEFRA with additional points that are not possible to make in the questionnaire response due to its format. In particular, we will be raising that the consultation is virtually silent on the relative importance of the 44 areas designated as Protected Landscapes as part of the Nature Recovery Network for England, or indeed the intended role of NPAs or AONBs units. This is disappointing given the imminence of the Defra consultation on the Glover Review. It also

says little about how other Government programmes or priorities should take account of NRNs in conducting their business, or how the various potential incentives and regulatory mechanisms might be brought to bear.

[DEFRA LNRS Consultation](#)

South East Regional collaboration: South East Nature Partnership

Work has started on developing a South East regional NRN framework. It is hoped that this will be a broad piece of work and will be a useful working tool for joining up on a regional NRN. It aims to:



- Demonstrate Collaborative working across the South East which can be used to underpin applications for funding and other resources.
- The SENP NRN will underpin all future work on nature recovery based on evidence, showing the opportunities for greater joined up working to encourage nature recovery
- Develop a framework that will ensure nature recovery is planned across a wider area allowing projects with greater impact to be developed and implemented
- Ensure species have the greatest possible area to spread and increase, building resilience as climate change continues to impact the region
- Bring together the work of all the parties involved to create a valuable database of information for all future work.
- Develop regional approach to the NRN opportunities ; identify regional hotspots, alert areas, critical boundary points & network gaps

The SENP is a collaboration of County level Local Nature Partnerships including Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire & the Isle of Wight, plus Essex and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

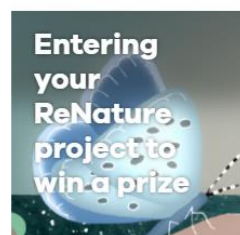
South Downs National Park perspective:



Help Nature to ReNature

At the moment 25% of the South Downs National Park is managed for nature. Our goal is to increase that to 33% by 2030.

Join us to help nature #ReNature



The South Downs Nature Recovery campaign #ReNature was launched in July 2021. The campaign is the public facing “call to action” through which we have set out ambition of increasing 25% of land for nature to 33% (or 13,000ha) by 2030. This comes directly off the back of the PM/Government pledge of 30% by 2030 and is informed by the National Parks England Wildlife Delivery Plan.

We are of course aware that the Authority cannot achieve this ambition alone and that working with others such as land managers, partners and communities is essential.

A link to the campaign website: <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/ReNature/>

A link to the campaign film: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/help-nature-to-renature-major-initiative-to-tackle-biodiversity-crisis-and-create-new-wildlife-rich-habitat/>



In order to support and help guide land managers, communities, partners and other stakeholders to take action for nature's recovery we have now gone live with a resource hub on the SDNPA website:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/nature-recovery-information-for-delivery-partners/>

The plan is to evolve the content over time so please do feedback if you have suggestion on what else would be useful.

"Re Nature" the South Downs National Park - Key Principles

As part of the South Downs Delivery Plan for Wildlife we have developed 10 key principles, which guide our approach to ReNature in the South Downs, these are outlined below:

Key Principles

- 1. Base decisions on an evidence based Local nature recovery map.** Use local mapping to inform the strategy and the best places to target interventions.
- 2. Protect our most special places.** Protect designated sites (Nature reserves, SSSIs and LWS), improve their management for biodiversity and increase their size.
- 3. Make connections between them.** Create corridors and stepping-stones to connect our special places and other areas of potential.
- 4. Provide a bigger overall area for wildlife.** Increase the overall area of land in provided for wildlife
- 5. Find space for wildlife in the wider landscape.** This Network should sit within a wider landscape characterised by nature-friendly development and farming. This would include encouraging a wide range of people to increase the amount of wildlife habitat in places like farms, parks, retail parks, churchyards, road verges, gardens and golf courses. *All spaces have the potential to contribute positively to nature's recovery.*
- 6. Right habitats in the right place for the right reason.** Taking opportunities to restore landscape character through the creation of new habitats, enhancing existing habitats and in response to a specific ecological or functional need.
- 7. A Network that works for people and nature.** The NRS should also take into account where the greatest benefits will be delivered for people, seek opportunities for investment in natural capital and multiple ecosystem services benefits

8. **Landowner informed (led) and delivery through partnership.** Placement of nature recovery interventions and land use change is informed and supported by Farmers and landowners and delivered through partnership.
9. **Net zero with nature and climate change resilience.** Linking nature recovery benefits with climate change actions, nature based solutions, such as Natural flood management, soil health and carbon storage. Developing climate change adaptation.
10. **Action for Species.** Prioritise species to be protected and re-introduced. Implement a long-term invasive non-native species control programme.



Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

Over 75 per cent of the South Downs National Park is farmed, made up of a mosaic of farm types including small family run farms and large farming estates. The mixture of livestock and arable farming gives the South Downs a very special feel, and has shaped the landscape we see today.

As we transition from the European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to a new agricultural support system, farming is going through a significant period of change. To help farmers and land managers in the country’s protected landscapes during this time and in recognition of the role they play in managing these areas, Defra has developed the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme as part of Defra’s [Agricultural Transition Plan](#), which will run from July 2021 to March 2024.

For more information on what FiPL can fund and how to apply go to:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/custodians/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes-fipl/>



What does Nature recovery mean for farming:

Farmers will be crucial to delivering the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and many other objectives outlined in the 25-year Environment Plan. For more information go to:

<https://www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/environment/environment-news/natural-england-launches-nature-recovery-network-partnership/>



The South Downs National park is designated as one of England's 10 special landscapes. The National Park can and should act as a backbone for Nature Recovery but it is important that we restore and create the right habitats in the right place. Key to this is to understand the local landscape type, the sensitivities of this landscape and the important habitats in the area.

Draft guidance has now been produced to help local decision-making, utilising the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2020 (see link below). The guidance looks at individual landscape character types and their key sensitivities and summarises the potential actions that can be taken both for nature or to be more nature friendly within these landscape types: [Nature Recovery by landscape type - South Downs National Park Authority](#)



To find out more about the landscape character types in your area and lots of additional information visit our web site. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/landscape-design-conservation/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment-2020/>

Definition buster or a useful link

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 is a Nature Recovery Network?

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.

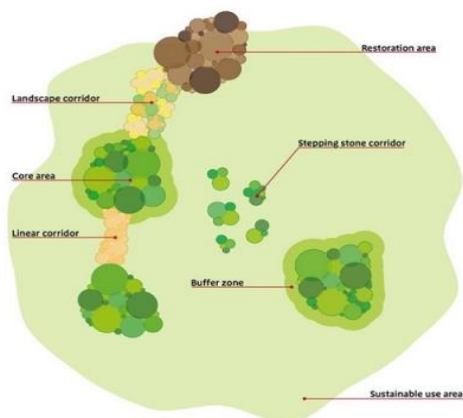
Let David Attenborough explain <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wZro6-4p94>

The NRN will be a national network of wildlife-rich places. The aim is to expand, improve and connect these places across our towns, cities and countryside.

The NRN is a major commitment in the [government's 25 Year Environment Plan](#) and part of the forthcoming Nature Strategy.

The link to the official Defra Policy paper 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network>

How a Nature Recovery Network is developed



Uses the “Lawton principles”:
bigger, better, more & joined

Illustration from:
Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H.,
Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M.,
Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne,
G.R. (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife
sites and ecological network. Report to Defra.

Please send your nature recovery enquiries to NatureRecovery@southdowns.gov.uk