

Natural England Update 2020



Natural England's Role



- Natural England is the Government's Statutory Advisor on the Natural Environment.
- A key purpose of Natural England is that of 'conserving and enhancing the landscape', including parklands and other designed landscapes.



Thank you for inviting us to speak again, I am Elaine Willett, Historic Environment Principal Adviser. I thought I start with a quick reminder of Natural England's role.


We are the Government adviser on nature conservation.

As our chief executive, Marion Spain, told all the staff this time last year, nature is not just the wildlife, but includes the geology, landscape, and history


That cultural, historic dimension of England's landscape is acknowledged by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act and the supporting guidance and is included within the definition of the term 'natural environment'. Restatement that Historic Environment is part of Natural England's core business.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) is unambiguous about Natural England's role in conserving and enhancing the landscape "for aesthetic, cultural and historic purposes", which includes "monuments, buildings and sub-surface archaeological features which contribute to the landscape".


Strategic Direction: Defra



- 25 Year Environment Plan: sets out Government's goals for improving the environment within a generation and leaving it in a better state than we found it. It details how Government will work with communities and businesses to do this.
- Defra will lead:
"Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage."


HM Government

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



I shared this slide with you last year. This year we are starting to deliver on the plan, creating a national partnership for delivery of a National Nature Recovery Network and setting up 5 pilot projects for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, more on these later.

Key Developments – NE's Structure



New vision – Thriving Nature for People and Planet

New mission – Building Partnerships for Nature Recovery

4 new programmes

- Resilient Landscapes and Seas
- Sustainable Development
- Greener Farming and Fisheries
- Connecting People with Nature

The optimism within the organisation that we mentioned last year has mainly been sustained and our Chair and Chief Executive Tony Juniper and Marion Spain have launched a new 5 year strategy, accompanied by a new vision, mission and goals. We have undergone reorganisation into projects to deliver the new goals. Our Historic Environment is affected by all 4 areas, from agri environment schemes, to National nature reserves, and in Net gain and Natural capital to our research on health and wellbeing and the environment and we are working with colleagues to integrate our thinking in all the different strands.



Our new 5-year plan was launched on 7th October

Nature belongs to everyone, and everyone should contribute to its recovery. Our mission is to build partnerships for Nature's recovery.

This document explains how we will work with a wide range of people and organisations to take the action needed to rebuild a sustainable environment.

It is a call to action, but also an invitation for you to engage with us in the conversations and partnerships which are essential for focused, effective deeds. Together we can really build the momentum needed to revive our natural world and bring it into everyone's daily life.

The aims are

a well-managed Nature Recovery Network across land, water and sea which creates and protects resilient ecosystems rich in wildlife and natural beauty, enjoyed by people and widely benefiting society

- **people connected to the natural environment** for their own and society's wellbeing, enjoyment, and prosperity

Nature-based solutions contributing fully to tackling the climate change challenge and wider environmental hazards and threats

- **improvements in the natural capital** that drives sustainable economic growth, healthy food systems and prospering communities

- **evidence and expertise** being used by a broad range of partnerships, organisations, and communities to achieve Nature recovery and enable effective regulation and accreditation

- **being a values-led organisation**, which delivers excellent service standards to all partners, organisations and communities engaged in achieving Nature's recovery



Last year I shared the good news that we had managed to get the Historic Environment Strategy endorsed, recognising the role of the historic environment as we said in the last slide. I also flagged up how the number of staff working on the Historic Environment had fallen since we were formed. **Reduced by 90%** since 2010, to 2.78 FTE

This Excludes Inheritance Tax Exemption Scheme staff (whose work is externally funded by HMRC) and historic environment experts deployed in Evidence Services (whose work doesn't relate to heritage) and ELM Guidance team (whose work is externally funded by Defra).

This extra resource has allowed us to make a start on a number of projects to raise the profile of the historic environment across the business, to better support the advisers on the ground, ensure the historic Environment is included in the tree, peat and nature strategies, making an audit of the heritage at risk on our own land, assisting with the writing of guidance for the new ELM scheme amongst other things.

Historic Environment Staff



- **Elaine Willett** – Principal Adviser: coordinating our work programme and leading on Strategy and Government advice
- **Dawn Enright** – Senior Specialist: on secondment to Historic England
- **Margaret Nieke** – Senior Specialist: advising on research, EIA casework
- **Louise Brown** – Senior Adviser in National Operations team: ELMS, Peat strategy, NNRs and agri environment advice
- **Hannah Rigden** – Senior Adviser: ELMS, strategy and communications



Progress with legislation



Environment Bill includes:

- Targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment; Net Gain; Nature Recovery Network; OEP; for statements and reports about environmental protection; about water; about nature and biodiversity; for conservation covenants etc.

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Agriculture Bill and Fisheries Bill include:

- Financial assistance for the conservation, enhancement or restoration of the environment including features of archaeological or historic interest in those areas

Last Year I introduced you to the environment bill and the agriculture bill, and opportunities for our sector including net gain and natural capital accounting. Natural capital accounting is essential for informing net gain delivery and Parks and gardens contribute to provisioning and cultural capital.

The Agriculture bill was sent back from the House of Lords with amendments. The amendments were agreed, and the bill is now awaiting Royal Assent, more on this in the next slide.

The Environment bill is being considered by a committee scheduled to report by 1st December. Those conservation covenants will allow for longer term buy in than the agri environment schemes

These are voluntary but legally binding agreements between a landowner and a designated “responsible body” such as a conservation charity, public body or for-profit body to conserve the natural or heritage features of the land.

Conservation covenants can contain positive and restrictive obligations to fulfil conservation objectives for the public good. They are a flexible tool – the parties can negotiate the terms (including the duration) of a conservation covenant to suit their circumstances. Generally, they will bind subsequent landowners and therefore have the potential to deliver long-lasting conservation benefits.

The Fisheries Bill – awaiting Royal Assent - went back to the Lords with amendments on the 12th November. Interestingly it has the same wording on the historic environment as the agriculture bill, not so relevant for designed landscapes but a major piece of legislation going through at the moment which affects our work. The Fisheries Act is the first piece of primary fisheries legislation in 39 years.

Agriculture Bill



Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme

- New post-Brexit agri-environment scheme
- Dependent on the Agriculture Bill
- Defra's scheme - Natural England provide technical advice



The Agriculture bill will be the future of agri environment funding now we are leaving the EU, based on providing payment for public goods – including cultural services and protection of the historic environment. The consultation on the ELM policy discussion document finished in the summer and is informing the development of the scheme. At present Natural England are providing technical advice to Defra by writing guidance for applicants on all the possible outcomes (the new name for options), and commissioning trials. This will inform a pilot of the scheme scheduled for next year. The outcomes include management and restoration of parks and gardens, including a wider range than before such as urban and peri-urban parks, memorial gardens and other types of designed landscapes. These will be reliant on good evidence and consultation to get good results.

Picture G2 listed Druids' Temple folly, Ilton, Yorkshire

Nature Recovery Networks



- A national network of wildlife-rich spaces, both protected sites and non designated ones to increase and restore nature
- Expand, improve and connect these places across our towns, cities and countryside
- Reinforce the natural and cultural diversity of our landscapes, and protect our historic natural environment
- We will use up to date mapping and data including Local Nature Recovery Strategies and work in partnership – you can get involved!



The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a major commitment in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. By bringing together partners, legislation, and funding, we can restore and enhance the natural environment. It specifically includes historic and cultural diversity. Working together is essential to deliver the NRN. We will work in partnership with organisations and across sectors, sharing skills, knowledge, and resources, to help achieve the objectives of the NRN. This partnership working includes government, landowners and managers, businesses, local communities, and conservation groups. We have set up the NRN Delivery Partnership to support partnership working.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)



- Pilots get £1m shared to map important sites and areas that could be restored
- Environment bill will require a strategy from every local authority in England
- Opportunities for local engagement

The Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a key part of delivering the nature recovery network on the ground. 5 pilot areas – Cumbria, Northumberland, Greater Manchester, Buckinghamshire and Cornwall have been chosen to work with us on the approach to Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The pilots will enable local authorities to set out their local priorities for restoring and linking up habitats so species can thrive, and agree the best places to help nature recover, plant trees, restore peatland, mitigate flood and fire risk, and create green spaces for local people to enjoy. The local strategies will underpin the national nature recovery network, 500 thousand hectares of habitat outside protected sites, linking them and providing green and blue infrastructure.

We have been involved in the development of a toolkit for local authorities, on what data is available, where we would advise specialist consultation for historic sites, and what considerations must be made where designed landscapes fall within areas identified for nature recovery actions, what is needed for local delivery and monitoring?

So, look out for consultations that you can feed into on these.

England Tree Strategy



- it is essential that hedgerow and in-field trees, **veteran trees, wood pasture** and urban trees all critically important for wildlife, **landscape**, carbon sequestration and **other societal benefits** are properly recognised. ...it is essential the considerable contribution such trees can make to delivery of desired outcomes is recognised and that mechanisms to maintain and enhance this component of our tree-scapes is afforded the priority it deserves.
- acknowledge the importance of the historic environment and the role trees play within **historic landscapes and parks**. It is vital there is consideration of the potential damage inappropriate trees or woodland can do to historic features and landscape...difficult to make informed decisions on the management of a site without proper consideration of the site's historic features.

The consultation on Defra's England Tree strategy started in June and ended in September. We supplied guidance on the need for protection for historic treescapes

This is an extract from our national response to the strategy.

It is due to be published later in the year.

Progress with the Glover recommendations



Glover Review

- Celebrated 1 year anniversary on 21st September
- Tony Juniper has responded
- 27 recommendations including:
 - Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition
 - New long-term programmes to increase the number of BAME visitors
 - Enhanced monitoring for reporting against progress with 25YEP
 - National Landscape Service



Our landscape team are already working on some of the recommendations on how landscapes are designated as AONB.

Countryside Stewardship



- HLS agreements have been being extended by 1 year, subject to criteria being met
- CS continues to be available to new applicants
- A parkland management plan (PA2 Feasibility Study), is required to inform restoration within 'priority parklands'

As with last year, our colleagues in area teams have been assessing HLS schemes which are about to expire, and if they are meeting their objectives and being managed well, the farmer will have the option to extend. If they need more capital works to reach objectives or have other problems they will end as normal and Countryside stewardship will be open to them, in competition with new applicants. The presence of Wood pasture and parkland and designated sites and some undesignated parks and gardens continue to be eligible for the scheme and contribute to scoring used to decide on priorities.

We continue to require a conservation management plan for sites coming into restoration, this is a standalone agreement. We have just completed a project for Historic England and the Gardens Trust to work out how many plans have been funded and to gather information on each plan to be held centrally, so next time a plan is needed we know what has been done in the past and don't repeat work.

Other work



- Working with our Connecting People and Nature team about using historic sites to improve inclusion for diverse communities, recognising the role that urban historic parks and gardens play.
- Improved comms
- Evidence programme

#heritagechat, BHM, etc
Bracken management M+E